CAROLYN *of the* CORNERS

RUTH
BELMORE
ENDICOTT

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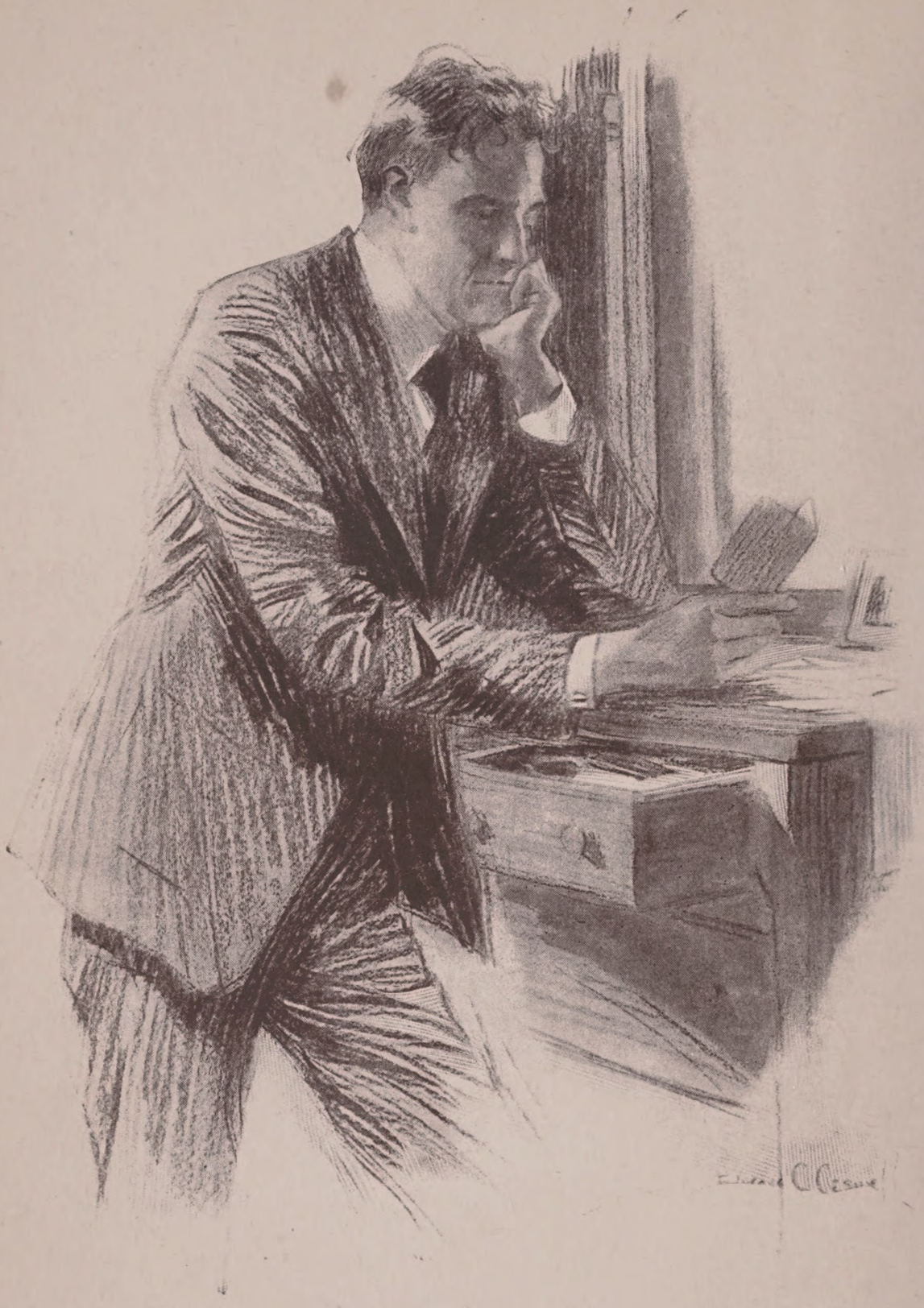

"Mandy! Mandy!" he murmured over and over again
(Page 119)

THE "LOOK UP" BOOK

CAROLYN OF THE CORNERS

BY

RUTH BELMORE ENDICOTT

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY
EDWARD C. CASWELL

NEW YORK
DODD, MEAD AND COMPANY
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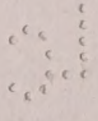

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CAROLYN OF THE CORNERS

CAROLYN OF THE CORNERS

CHAPTER I

THE RAY OF SUNLIGHT

JUST as the rays of the afternoon sun hesitated to enter the open door of Joseph Stagg's hardware store in Sunrise Cove, and lingered on the sill, so the little girl in the black frock and hat, with twin braids of sunshiny hair on her shoulders, hovered at the entrance of the dim and dusty place.

She carried a satchel in one hand, while the fingers of the other were hooked into the rivet-studded collar of a mottled, homely mongrel dog, who likewise looked curiously into the dusky interior of Mr. Stagg's shop, and whose abbreviated tail quivered expectantly.

"Oh, dear me, Prince!" sighed the little girl, "this must be the place. We'll just *have* to go in. Of course, I know he must be a nice man; but he's *such* a stranger!"

She sighed again; but Prince whined eagerly. He seemed much more sanguine of a welcome than did his mistress. Her feet faltered over the doorsill and

paced slowly down the shop between the long counters, each step slower than its predecessor.

She saw no clerk; only the littered counters, the glass-enclosed showcases, the low bins of nails and bolts on either hand, and the high shelves filled with innumerable boxes, on the end of each of which was a sample piece of hardware.

At the back of the shop was a small office closed in with grimy windows. There was not much light there. The uncertain visitor and her canine companion saw the shadowy figure of a man inside the office, sitting on a high stool and bent above a big ledger.

The dog, however, scented something else. The hair on his neck began to bristle, and he sniffed inquiringly.

In the half darkness of the shop he and his little mistress came unexpectedly upon what Prince considered his arch-enemy. There rose up on the end of the counter nearest the open office door a big, black tom-cat whose arched back, swollen tail, and yellow eyes blazing defiance, proclaimed his readiness to give battle to the quivering dog.

"Ps-s-st—ye-ow!"

The rising yowl broke the silence of the shop like a trumpet-call. The little girl dropped her bag and seized the dog's collar with both hands.

"Prince!" she cried, "don't you speak to that cat—don't you *dare* speak to it!"

The dog quivered all over in an ague of desire.

The instincts of the chase possessed his doggish soul, but his little mistress' word was law to him.

"Bless me!" croaked a voice from the office.

The tom-cat uttered a second "ps-s-st—ye-ow!" and shot up a ladder to the top shelf, from which vantage he looked down, showering insults on his enemy in a low and threatening tone.

"Bless me!" repeated Joseph Stagg, taking off his eye-glasses and leaving them in the ledger to mark his place. "What have you brought that dog in here for?"

He came to the office door. Without his glasses, and with the girl standing between him and the light, Mr. Stagg squinted a little to see her, stooping, with his hands on his knees.

"I—I didn't have any place to leave him," was the hesitating reply to the rather petulant query.

"Hum! Did your mother send you for something?"

"No-o, sir," sighed the little visitor.

"Your father wants something, then?" questioned the puzzled hardware dealer.

"No-o, sir."

At that moment a more daring ray of sunlight found its way through the transom over the store door and lit up the dusky place. It fell upon the slight, black-frocked figure and, for the instant, touched the pretty head as with an aureole.

"Bless me, child!" exclaimed Mr. Stagg. "Who are you?"

The flowerlike face of the little girl quivered, the blue eyes spilled big drops over her cheeks. She approached Mr. Stagg, stooping and squinting in the office doorway, and placed a timid hand upon the broad band of black crêpe he wore on his coat sleeve.

"You're not Hannah's Car'lyn?" questioned the hardware dealer huskily.

"I'm Car'lyn May Cameron," she confessed. "You're my Uncle Joe. I'm very glad to see you, Uncle Joe, and—and I hope—you're glad to see me—and Prince," she finished rather falteringly.

"Bless me!" murmured the man again, leaning for support against the door frame.

Nothing so startling as this had entered Sunrise Cove's chief "hardware emporium," as Mr. Stagg's standing advertisement read in the *Weekly Bugle*, for many and many a year.

Hannah Stagg, the hardware merchant's only sister, had gone away from home quite fifteen years previously. Mr. Stagg had never seen Hannah again; but this slight, blue-eyed, sunny-haired girl was a replica of his sister, and in some dusty corner of Mr. Stagg's heart there dwelt a very faithful memory of Hannah.

Nothing had served to estrange the brother and sister save time and distance. Hannah had been a patient correspondent, and Joseph Stagg had always acknowledged the receipt of her letters in a business-like way, if with brevity.

"DEAR HANNAH:

"Yours of the 12th inst. to hand and contents noted. Glad to learn of your continued good health and that of your family, this leaving me in the same condition.

"Yours to command,

"J. STAGG."

The hardware merchant was fully as sentimental as the above letter indicated. If there were drops now in his eyes as he stooped and squinted at his little niece, it was because the sunlight was shining in his face and interfered for the moment with his vision.

"Hannah's Car'lyn," muttered Mr. Stagg again. "Bless me, child! how did you get here from New York?"

"On the cars, uncle." Carolyn May was glad he asked that question instead of saying anything just then about her mother and father.

"You see, Mr. Price thought I'd better come. He says you are my guardian—it's in papa's will, and would have been so in mamma's will, if she'd made one. Mr. Price put me on the train and the conductor took care of me. Only, I rode 'most all the way with Prince in the baggage car. You see, he howled so."

Mr. Stagg looked askance at the dog, that yawned, smiled at him, and cocked his cropped ears.

"Who is Mr. Price?" the storekeeper asked.

"He's a lawyer. He and his family live in the flat right across the hall from us. He's written you a long letter about it. It's in my bag. Didn't you get the telegram he sent you last evening, Uncle Joe? A 'night letter,' he called it."

"Never got it," replied Mr. Stagg shortly.

"Well, you see, when papa and mamma had to go away so suddenly, they left me with the Prices. I go to school with Edna Price, and she slept with me at night in our flat—after the *Dunraven* sailed."

"But—but what did this lawyer send you up here for?" asked Mr. Stagg, still with an eye on the dog.

The question was a poser, and Carolyn May stammered: "I—I— Don't guardians *always* take their little girls home and look out for them?"

"Hum, I don't know." The hardware merchant mused grimly. "But if your father left a will—However, I suppose I shall learn all about it in that lawyer's letter."

"Oh, yes, sir!" the child said, hastily turning to open the bag. But he interposed:

"We'll wait about that, Car'lyn May. I—I guess we'd better go up to The Corners and see what Aunty Rose has to say about it. You understand, I couldn't really keep you if she says 'No!'"

"Oh, Uncle Joe! couldn't you?"

"No," he declared, wagging his head decidedly. "And what she'll say to that dog——"

"Oh!" Carolyn May cried again, and put both arms suddenly about the neck of her canine friend.

"Prince is just the *best* dog, Uncle Joe. He never quarrels, and he's almost always got a pleasant smile. He's a universal fav'rite."

Prince yawned again, showing two perfect rows of wolflike teeth. Mr. Stagg cast a glance upward at the perturbed tom-cat.

"I can see he's a favourite with old Jimmy," he said with added grimness.

It must be confessed that Carolyn May was nervous about Prince. She was eager to explain.

"You see, we've had him a dreadfully long time. Papa and I were taking a walk on a Sunday morning. We 'most always did, for that's all the time papa had away from his work. And we walked down towards the Harlem River—and what do you *s'pose*, Uncle Joe? A man was carrying Prince—he was just a little puppy, not long got over being blind. And the man was going to drown him!"

"Well," said Mr. Stagg reflectively, still eyeing the dog, "it could not have been his beauty that saved him from a watery grave."

"Oh, uncle! I think he's real beautiful, even if he is a mongorel," sighed Carolyn May. "Anyway, papa bought him from the man for a quarter, and Prince has been mine ever since."

Mr. Stagg shook his head doubtfully. Then he went into the office and shut the big ledger into the safe. After locking the safe door, he slipped the key into his trousers pocket, and glanced around the store.

"I'd like to know where that useless Gormley boy is now. If I ever happen to want him," muttered Mr. Stagg, "he ain't in sight nor sound. And if I don't want him, he's right under foot."

"Chet! Hey! you Chet!"

To Carolyn May's amazement and to the utter mystification of Prince, a section of the floor under their feet began to rise.

"Oh, mercy me!" squealed the little girl, and she hopped off the trapdoor; but the dog uttered a quick, threatening growl, and put his muzzle to the widening aperture.

"Hey! call off that dog!" begged a muffled voice from under the trapdoor. "He'll eat me up, Mr. Stagg."

"Lie down, Prince!" commanded Carolyn May hastily. "It's only a boy. You know you *like* boys, Prince," she urged.

"I sh'd think he did like 'em. Likes to eat 'em, don't he?" drawled the lanky, flaxen-haired youth who gradually came into view through the opening trap. "Hey, Mr. Stagg, don't they call dogs 'man's cayenne friend'? And there sure is some pep to this one. You got a tight hold on his collar, sissy?"

"Come on up out o' that cellar, Chet. I'm going up to The Corners with my little niece—Hannah's Car'lyn. This is Chetwood Gormley. If he ever stops growin' longitudinally, mebbe he'll be a man some day, and not a giant. You stay right here and tend store while I'm gone, Chet."

Carolyn May could not help feeling some surprise at the finally revealed proportions of Chetwood Gormley. He was lathlike and gawky, with very prominent upper front teeth, which gave a sort of bow-window appearance to his wide mouth. But there was a good-humoured twinkle in the overgrown boy's shallow eyes; and, if uncouth, he was kind.

"I'm proud to know ye, Car'lyn," he said. He stepped quickly out of the way of Prince when the latter started for the front of the store. "Just whisper to your cayenne friend that I'm one of the family, will you?"

"Oh, Prince wouldn't bite," laughed the little girl gaily.

"Then he's got a lot of perfectly useless teeth, hasn't he?" suggested Chetwood.

"Oh, no——" commenced the little girl.

"Come on, now," said Mr. Stagg with some impatience, and led the way to the door.

Prince paced sedately along by Carolyn May's side. Once out of the shop in the sunlit street, the little girl breathed a sigh of relief. Mr. Stagg, peering down at her sharply, asked:

"What's the matter?"

"I—I— Your shop is awful dark, Uncle Joe," she confessed. "I can't seem to *look up* in there."

"'Look up'?" repeated the hardware dealer, puzzled.

"Yes, sir. My papa says never to get in any place where you can't *look up* and see something

brighter and better ahead," said Carolyn May softly. "He says that's what makes life worth living."

"Oh! he does, does he?" grunted Mr. Stagg.

He noticed the heavy bag in her hand and took it from her. Instantly her released fingers stole into his free hand. Mr. Stagg looked down at the little hand on his palm, somewhat startled and not a little dismayed. To Carolyn May it was the most natural thing in the world to clasp hands with Uncle Joe as they walked, but it actually made the hardware dealer blush!

The main street of Sunrise Cove on this warm afternoon was not thronged with shoppers. Not many people noticed the tall, shambling, round-shouldered man in rusty black, with the petite figure of the child and the mongrel dog passing that way, though a few idle shopkeepers looked after the trio in surprise. But when Mr. Stagg and his companions turned into the pleasantly shaded street that led out of town towards The Corners—where was the Stagg homestead—Carolyn May noticed her uncle become suddenly flustered. She saw the blood flood into his face and neck, and she felt his hand loosen as though to release her own. The little girl looked ahead curiously at the woman who was approaching.

She was not a young woman—that is, not what the child would call young. Carolyn May thought she was very nice looking—tall and robust. She had beautiful brown hair, and a brown complexion, with a golden-red colour in her cheeks like that of a

russet apple. Her brown eyes flashed an inquiring glance upon Carolyn May, but she did not look at Mr. Stagg, nor did Mr. Stagg look at her.

"Oh! who *is* that lady, Uncle Joe?" asked the little girl when they were out of earshot.

"Hum!" Her uncle's throat seemed to need clearing. "That—*that* is Mandy Parlow—*Miss* Amanda Parlow," he corrected himself with dignity.

The flush did not soon fade out of his face as they went on in silence.

CHAPTER II

AN OLD-FASHIONED ROSE

THE street was slightly rising. The pleasant-looking houses on either hand had pretty lawns and gardens about them. Carolyn May Cameron thought Sunrise Cove a very lovely place—as was quite natural to a child brought up in the city.

Prince approved of the freedom of the street, too. A cat crossed slowly and with dignity from curb to curb ahead of them, and the dog almost forgot his manners.

"Here!" exclaimed Mr. Stagg sharply. "Haven't you a leash for that mongrel? If we've got to take him along——"

"Oh, yes, Uncle Joe," Carolyn May hastened to assure him. "There's a strap in my bag—right on top of the other things. *Do* let me get it. You see, Prince has had trouble with cats; they worry him."

"Looks to me," grunted Mr. Stagg, "as though he'd like to worry them. What Aunty Rose will say to that mongrel——"

"Oh, dear me!" sighed the little girl. This "Aunty Rose" he spoke of must be a regular ogress! Carolyn May had opened the bag and

found the strong strap, and now she snapped it into the ring of Prince's collar. "You'll just *have* to be good, now, you darling old dear!" she whispered to him.

It was half a mile from Main Street to The Corners. There was tall timber all about Sunrise Cove, which was built along the shore of a deep inlet cutting in from the great lake, whose blue waters sparkled as far as one might see towards the south and west.

Uncle Joe assured Carolyn May, when she asked him, that from the highest hill in sight one could see only the lake and the forest—clothed hills and valleys. Why, there was not a brick house anywhere!

"We don't have any apartment houses, or janitors, or gas and electricity up here," said Mr. Stagg grimly. "But there's lumber camps all about. Mebbe they'll interest you. Lots of building going on all the time, too. Sunrise Cove is growing, but it isn't very citified yet."

He told her, as they went along, of the long trains of cars and of the strings of barges going out of the Cove, all laden with timber and sawed boards, millstuff, ties, and telegraph poles.

They came to the last house in the row of dwellings on this street, on the very edge of the town. Carolyn May saw that attached to the house was a smaller building, facing the roadway, with a wide-open door, through which she glimpsed benches and

sawed lumber, while to her nostrils was wafted a most delicious smell of shavings.

"Oh, there's a carpenter shop!" exclaimed Carolyn May. "And is that the carpenter, Uncle Joe?"

A tall old man, lean-faced and closely shaven, with a hawk's-beak nose straddled by a huge pair of silver-bowed spectacles, came out of the shop at that moment, a jack-plane in his hand. He saw Mr. Stagg and, turning sharply on his heel, went indoors again.

"Who is he, Uncle Joe?" repeated the little girl. "And, if I asked him, do you s'pose he'd give me some of those nice, long, curly shavings?"

"That's Jed Parlow—and he *wouldn't* give you any shavings; especially after having seen you with me," said the hardware merchant brusquely.

The pretty lady whose name was Parlow and the queer-looking old carpenter, whose name was likewise Parlow, would neither look at Uncle Joe! Even such a little girl as Carolyn May could see that her uncle and the Parlows were not friendly. It puzzled her, but she did not feel that she could ask Uncle Joe about it. So she trudged by his side, holding to his hand and to the dog's leash.

The street soon became a country road, and there were now no passers-by. A half-cleared forest lay on either hand—rough pasture land. By-and-by they came in sight of The Corners—a place where another road crossed this one at right angles. Both were wide roads, and a little green park had been

left in the middle of the way at their intersection, around which was a rusty iron railing.

In one corner was a white church with a square tower and green blinds. This was railed around by rusty iron pipe, as was the graveyard behind it. At one side was a row of open horse sheds. In another of the four corners was set a big store, with a covered porch all across the front, on which were sheltered certain agricultural tools, as well as a row of more or less decrepit chairs—at this hour of the day unoccupied.

A couple of country wagons stood before the store, but there was no sound of life at The Corners save a rhythmic "clank, clank, clank" from the blacksmith shop on the third corner. Carolyn May had a glimpse of a black-faced man in a red shirt and a leather apron, and with hairy arms, striking the sparks from a rosy iron on the anvil next the forge, the dull glow of the forge fire making a background for this portrait of "The Village Blacksmith."

On the fourth corner of the crossroads stood the Stagg homestead—a wide, low-roofed house of ancient appearance, yet in good repair. The grass was lush under the wide-spreading maples in the front yard, and the keys which had fallen from these trees were carefully brushed into heaps on the brick walk for removal. Neatness was the keynote of all about the place.

"Is *this* where you live, Uncle Joe?" asked

Carolyn May breathlessly. "Oh, what a beautiful big place! Aren't there any other families with flats here, too?"

"Bless me! No, child," returned the hardware dealer. "I never noticed the house was any too big for one family."

"Of course," said the little girl, "it isn't so *tall;* but it's 'most as long as a whole block of houses in the city. One of the short blocks, I mean. My papa said seven of the crosstown blocks made a mile, and twenty of the short blocks. So this house must be 'most a twentieth of a mile long, Uncle Joe. It seems awful big for *me* to live in!"

Mr. Stagg had halted at the gate, and now looked down upon Carolyn May with perplexed brow. "Well, we've got to see about that first," he muttered. "There's Aunty Rose——"

A voice calling, "Chuck! Chuck! Chuck-a-chuck!" came from behind the old house. A few white-feathered fowls that had been in sight scurried wildly away in answer to the summons.

Mr. Stagg, still looking at the little girl, set down the bag and reached for the dog's leash. The loop of the latter he passed around the gatepost.

"I tell you what it is, Car'lyn May. You'd better meet Aunty Rose first alone. I've my fears about this mongrel."

"Oh, Uncle Joe!" quavered his niece.

"You go ahead and get acquainted with her," urged Mr. Stagg. "She don't like dogs. They

chase her chickens and run over her flower-beds. Aunty Rose is peculiar, I might say."

"Oh, Uncle Joe!" repeated the little girl faintly.

"You've got to make her like you, if you want to live here," the hardware dealer concluded firmly; "and that's all there is to it."

He gave Carolyn May a little shove up the path, and then stood back and mopped his brow with his handkerchief. Prince strained at the leash and whined, wishing to follow his little mistress.

Mr. Stagg said: "You'd better keep mighty quiet, dog. If you want your home address to be The Corners, sing small!"

Carolyn May did not hear this, but disappeared after the fowls around the corner of the wide, vine-draped porch. The pleasant back yard was full of sunshine. On the gravel path beyond the old well, with its long sweep and bucket, half a hundred chickens, some guineas, and a flock of turkeys scuffled for grain which was being thrown to them from an open pan.

That pan was held in the plump hand of a very dignified-looking woman, dressed in drab, and with a sunbonnet on her head. Her voluminous skirt blew about her tall figure; she was plump, but very upright; her cheeks were rosy; her spectacles sparkled; and her full lips were puckered into a matrix for the mellow call:

"Chuck! Chuck! Chuck-a-chuck!"

Aunty Rose's appearance smote the little girl with

a feeling of awe. Her bonnet was so stiffly starched, the line of her old-fashioned stays across her plump shoulders was as unequivocal as a confession of faith. And when she turned her face to the child, the latter, young as she was, knew that the woman's attitude to all the world was despotic.

There was no frown on her face; it was only calm, unruffled, unemotional. It simply seemed as though nothing, either material or spiritual, could ruffle the placidity of Aunty Rose Kennedy.

She came of Quaker stock, and the serenity of body and spirit taught by the sect built a wall between her and everybody else. At least, so it seemed to Carolyn May. And when Aunty Rose first looked at her, she seemed to the child to be merely peering over that wall. The little girl could not get close enough to the woman to " snuggle up."

" Child, who are you? " asked Aunty Rose with some curiosity.

The little girl told her name; but perhaps it was her black frock and hat that identified her in Aunty Rose's mind, after all.

" You are Hannah Stagg's little girl," she said.

" Yes'm—if you please," Carolyn May confessed faintly.

" And how came you here alone? "

" If you please, Uncle Joe said I'd better prob'ly come ahead and get acquainted with you first."

" ' First '? What do you mean, ' first '? " asked Aunty Rose sternly.

"First—before you saw Prince," responded the perfectly frank little girl. "Uncle Joe thought maybe you wouldn't care for dogs."

"Dogs!"

"No, ma'am. And, of course, where I live, Prince has to live, too. So——"

"So you brought the dog?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Of course," said Aunty Rose composedly, "I expected you to come here. I do not know what Joseph Stagg expected. But I did not suppose you would have a dog. Where is Joseph Stagg?"

"He—he's coming."

"With the dog?"

"Yes, ma'am."

Aunty Rose seemed to take some time to digest this; but she made no further comment in regard to the matter, only saying:

"Let us go into the house, Car'lyn May. You must take off your hat and bathe your face and hands."

Carolyn May Cameron followed the stately figure of Aunty Rose Kennedy into the blue-and-white kitchen of the old house, with something of the feelings of a culprit on the way to the block.

Such a big kitchen as it was! The little girl thought it must be almost as big as their whole apartment in Harlem "put together"—and they had a tiny private hall, too. There was a great, deep, enameled sink, with hot and cold water faucets over

it, and a big, shiny, corrugated drainboard beside it. Evidently Aunty Rose was not dependent upon the old well in the yard for her water supply.

There was a shining copper boiler, and a great range, and set tubs of stone, and a big dresser, and a kitchen cabinet. The walls were covered with tile paper and the floor with linoleum, and there were plenty of braided mats about to make the room seem livable. At the cooler end of the kitchen the supper table was already set—for three.

"Why," mused the little girl, "she must have suspected me," and a warmer glow filtered into the heart of the "suspected" guest.

It was not till afterwards that she realised that the extra plate on the table was a part of the old-time Quaker creed—the service for the Unknown Guest.

"Used to make me feel right spooky when she first came here," Mr. Stagg sometimes said, "but I got used to it. And it does seem hospitable."

The little girl took off her plain black hat, shook back her hair, and patted it smooth with her hands, then plunged her hands and face into the basin of cool water Aunty Rose had drawn for her at the sink. The dust was all washed away and a fresh glow came into her flowerlike face. Aunty Rose watched her silently.

Such a dignified, upright, unresponsive woman as she seemed standing there! And so particular, neat, and immaculate was this kitchen!

Carolyn May, as she dried her face and hands, heard a familiar whine at the door. It was Prince. She wondered if she had at all broken the ice for him with Aunty Rose.

"Oh," the little girl mused, "I wonder what she will say to a mongorel."

CHAPTER III

GOING TO BED

MR. STAGG had fastened Prince's strap to the porch rail, and he now came in with the bag.

"Is that all the child's baggage, Joseph Stagg?" asked Aunty Rose, taking it from his hand.

"Why—why, I never thought to ask her," the man admitted. "Have you a trunk check, Car'lyn?"

"No, sir."

"They sent you up here with only that bag?" Mr. Stagg said with some exasperation. "Haven't you got any clothes but those you stand in?"

"Mrs. Price said—said they weren't suitable," explained the little girl. "You see, they aren't black."

"Oh!" exploded her uncle.

"You greatly lack tact, Joseph Stagg," said Aunty Rose, and the hardware dealer cleared his throat loudly as he went to the sink to perform his pre-supper ablutions. Carolyn May did not understand just what the woman meant.

"Ahem!" said Uncle Joe gruffly. "S'pose I ought t've read that letter before. What's come of it, Car'lyn May?"

But just then the little girl was so deeply interested in what Aunty Rose was doing that she failed to hear him. Mrs. Kennedy brought out of the pantry a tin pie plate, on which were scraps of meat and bread, besides a goodly marrow bone.

"If you think the dog is hungry, Car'lyn May," she said, "you would better give him this before we break our fast."

"Oh, Aunty Rose!" gasped the little girl, her sober face all a-smile. "He'll be de-*light*-ed."

She carried the pan out to Prince. But first, seeing the immaculate condition of the porch floor, she laid a sack down before the hungry dog and put the pan upon it.

"For, you see," she told Aunty Rose, who stood in the kitchen doorway watching her, "when he has a bone, he just *will* get grease all around. He really can't help it."

Aunty Rose made no audible comment, but she seemed to view Prince with more curiosity than hostility.

When the door closed again, Mrs. Kennedy went to the stove, and instantly, with the opening of the oven, the rush of delicious odour from it made Carolyn May's mouth fairly water. The lunch she had eaten on the train seemed to have happened a long, long time ago.

Such flaky biscuit—two great pans full of the brown beauties! Mr. Stagg sat down at the table and actually smiled.

"You never made any bread that *smelt* better, Aunty Rose," he said emphatically.

She had removed her sunbonnet, and her grey-brown hair proved to be in perfectly smooth braids wound about her head. She must have been well over sixty years of age. Uncle Joe seemed boyish beside her; yet Carolyn May had at first thought the hardware dealer a very old man.

The little girl took her indicated place at the table timidly. The cloth was a red and white checked one, freshly ironed, as were the napkins to match. There was a squat old silver bowl in the middle of the board, full of spoons of various sizes, and also a castor, like a miniature carousel, holding several bottles of sauces and condiments. The china was of good quality and prettily flowered. The butter was iced, and there was a great glass pitcher of milk, which looked cool and inviting.

"Joseph Stagg," said Aunty Rose, sitting down, "ask a blessing."

Uncle Joe's harsh voice seemed suddenly to become gentle as he reverently said grace. A tear or two squeezed through Carolyn May's closed eyelids, for that had been her duty at home; she had said grace ever since she could speak plainly.

If Aunty Rose noticed the child's emotion, she made no comment, only helped her gravely to cold meat, stewed potatoes, and hot biscuit.

Mr. Stagg was in haste to eat and get back to the store. "Or that Chet Gormley will try to make a

meal off some of the hardware, I guess," he said gloomily.

"Oh, dear me, Uncle Joe!" exclaimed Carolyn May. "If he did that, he'd die of indignation."

"Huh? Oh! I guess 'twould cause indigestion," agreed her uncle.

Aunty Rose did not even smile. She sat so very stiff and upright in her chair that her back never touched the back of the chair; she was very precise and exact in all her movements.

"Bless me!" Mr. Stagg exclaimed suddenly. "What's that on the mantel, Aunty Rose? That yaller letter?"

"A telegram for you, Joseph Stagg," replied the old lady as composedly as though the receipt of a telegram was an hourly occurrence at The Corners.

"Well!" muttered the hardware dealer, and Carolyn May wondered if he were not afraid to express just the emotion he felt at that instant. His face was red, and he got up clumsily to secure the sealed message.

"Who brought it, and when?" he asked finally, having read the lawyer's night letter.

"A boy. This morning," said Aunty Rose, utterly calm.

"And I never saw it this noon," grumbled the hardware dealer.

Mrs. Kennedy quite ignored any suggestion of impatience in Mr. Stagg's voice or manner. But he

seemed to lose taste for his supper after reading the telegram.

"Where is the letter that this Mr. Price wrote and sent by you, Car'lyn?" he asked as he was about to depart for the store.

The little girl asked permission to leave the table, and then ran to open her bag. Mr. Stagg said doubtfully:

"I s'pose you'll have to put her somewhere—for the present. Don't see what else we can do, Aunty Rose."

"You may be sure, Joseph Stagg, that her room was ready for her a week ago," Mrs. Kennedy rejoined, quite unruffled.

The surprised hardware dealer gurgled something in his throat. "What room?" he finally stammered.

"That which was her mother's. Hannah Stagg's room. It is next to mine, and she will come to no harm there."

"Hannah's!" exclaimed Mr. Stagg. "Why, that ain't been slept in since she went away."

"It is quite fit, then," said Aunty Rose, "that it should be used for her child. Trouble nothing about things that do not concern you, Joseph Stagg," she added with, perhaps, additional sternness.

Carolyn May did not hear this. She now produced the letter from her lawyer neighbour.

"There it is, Uncle Joe," she said. "I—I guess he tells you all about me in it."

"Hum!" said the hardware man, clearing his throat and picking up his hat. "I'll read it down at the store."

"Shall—shall I see you again to-night, Uncle Joe?" the little girl asked wistfully. "You know, my bedtime's half-past eight."

"Well, if you don't see me to-night again, you'll be well cared for, I haven't a doubt," said Uncle Joe shortly, and went out.

Carolyn May went soberly back to her chair. She did not eat much more. Somehow there seemed to be a big lump in her throat past which she could not force the food. As the dusk fell, the spirit of loneliness gripped her, and the tears pooled behind her eyelids, ready to pour over her cheeks at the least "joggle." Yet she was not usually a "cry-baby" girl.

Aunty Rose was watching her more closely than Carolyn May supposed. After her third cup of tea she arose and began quietly clearing the table. The newcomer was nodding in her place, her blue eyes clouded with sleep and unhappiness.

"It is time for you to go to bed, Car'lyn May," said Aunty Rose firmly. "I will show you the room Hannah Stagg had for her own when she was a girl."

"Thank you, Aunty Rose," said the little girl humbly.

She picked up the bag and followed the stately old woman into the back hall and up the stairway into the ell. Carolyn May saw that at the foot of

the stairs was a door leading out upon the porch where Prince was now moving about uneasily at the end of his leash. She would have liked to say "good-night" to Prince, but it seemed better not to mention this feeling to Aunty Rose.

The fading hues of sunset in the sky gave the little girl plenty of light to undress by. She thought the room very beautiful, too. It was large, and the ceiling sloped at one side; the bed was wide and plump looking. It had four funny, spindle-shaped posts, and it was covered with a bright patchwork quilt of many tiny squares—quite an intricate pattern, Carolyn May thought.

"Do you need any help, child?" asked Mrs. Kennedy, standing in her soldierly manner in the doorway. It was dusky there, and the little girl could not see her face.

"Oh, no, ma'am," said Carolyn May faintly. "I can button and unbutton every button. I learned long ago. And my nightie's right in my bag here."

"Very well," said Aunty Rose, and turned away. Carolyn May stood in the middle of the room and listened to her descending footsteps. *Aunty Rose had not even bidden her good-night!*

Like a marooned sailor upon a desert island, the little girl went about exploring the bedroom which was to be hers—and which had once been her mother's. That fact helped greatly. Her mother had slept in this very bed—had looked into that cunning, clouded glass over the dressing table—had

sat in this very little rocking chair to take off her shoes and stockings—had hung her dress, perhaps, over this other chair.

Carolyn May kept repeating these things as she divested herself of her garments and got into the nightgown that Mrs. Price had freshly ironed for her. Then she looked at the high, "puffy" bed.

"How ever *can* I get into it?" sighed Carolyn May.

She had to stand upon her tiptoes in her fluffy little bedroom slippers to pull back the quilt, and the blanket and sheet underneath it. The bed was just a great big bag of feathers!

"Just like a big, big pillow," thought the little girl. "And if I do get into it, I'm li'ble to sink down, and down, and *down,* till I'm buried, and won't ever be able to get up in the morning."

Carolyn May had never seen anything softer to sleep on than a mattress of pressed felt. A feather bed might be all right, but she felt more than a little shy of venturing into it.

The window was open, and she went to it and looked out. A breath of honeysuckle blew in. Then, below, on the porch, she heard the uneasy movements of Prince. And he whined.

"Oh, poor Princey! He doesn't know what's become of me," thought Carolyn May.

Downstairs, in the great kitchen, Aunty Rose was stepping back and forth, from table to sink, from sink to dresser, from dresser to pantry. As the day-

light faded, she lit the lamp which swung from the ceiling and gave light to all the room.

It would have been impossible for the wisest person to guess what were the thoughts in Aunty Rose's mind. She might have been thinking of that sunny-haired, blue-eyed little girl upstairs, so lately bereft of those whom she loved, a stranger to-night in a new home, going to bed for the first time in her life alone; aye, she *might* have been thinking of her. Or she might merely have been deciding in her mind whether to have batter cakes or waffles for breakfast.

A glad little yelp from the dog tied to the rail of the porch sounded suddenly. Even Aunty Rose could not mistake that cry of welcome, and she knew very little about dogs—to their credit, at least. She had heard no other suspicious sound, but now she crossed the room with firm tread and opened the porch door. Yes, a little white figure was down there, hugging the whining mongrel; and if the latter could have spoken English he could have made it no whit plainer how glad he was to see his little mistress.

Carolyn May's tearful face was raised from Prince's rough neck.

"Oh, Aunty Rose! Oh, Aunty Rose!" she sobbed. "I just *had* to say good-night to somebody. Edna's mother came and heard our prayers and tucked us into my bed after my papa and mamma went away. So it didn't seem so bad.

"But to-night—Why! to-night there isn't any-

body cares whether I go to bed or not! But Prince! Prince, *he* knows just how—how *empty* I feel!"

The woman stood in the doorway with the light behind her, so Carolyn May could not see her face; her voice was perfectly calm when she said:

"You would better come in now and wash your face and hands again before going to bed. That dog has been lapping them with his tongue."

Sobbing, the little girl obeyed. The dog curled down on the porch as though satisfied, having seen that his little mistress was all right. The latter trotted over the cold linoleum to the sink and did as Mrs. Kennedy directed. Then she would have gone back up the stairs without a word had not Aunty Rose spoken.

"Come here, Carolyn May," she said quite as sternly as before.

The little girl approached her. The old lady sat in one of the straightest of the straight-backed chairs, her hands in her comfortable lap. The wet blue eyes were raised to her composed face timidly.

"If you wish to say your prayers here, before going upstairs, you may, Carolyn May," she said.

"Oh, may I?" gasped the little girl.

She dropped her hands into Aunty Rose's lap. Somehow they found those larger, comforting hands and cuddled into them as the little girl sank to her knees on the braided mat.

If the simple "Now I lay me" was familiar to Aunty Rose's ear from long ago, she gave no sign.

When the earnest little voice added to the formal supplication a desire for the blessing of "Uncle Joe and Aunty Rose," the latter's countenance retained its composure.

She asked a blessing upon all her friends, including the Prices, and even Prince. But it was after that she put the timid question to Aunty Rose that proved to be almost too much for that good woman's studied calm.

"Aunty Rose, do you s'pose I might ask God to bless my mamma and papa, even if they *are* lost at sea? Somehow, I don't think it would seem so lonesome if I could keep *that* in my prayer."

CHAPTER IV

"WELL—SHE'LL BE A NUISANCE"

MR. JOSEPH STAGG, going down to his store, past the home and carpenter shop of Jedidiah Parlow, at which he did not even look, finally came to his destination in a very brown study. So disturbed had he been by the arrival of his little niece that he forgot to question and cross-question young Chetwood Gormley regarding the possible customers that had been in the store during his absence.

"And I tell you what I think, mother," Chet said, with his mouth full, at supper that evening. "I think her coming's goin' to bring about changes. Yes, ma'am!"

Mrs. Gormley was a faded little woman—a widow—who went out sewing for better-to-do people in Sunrise Cove. She naturally thought her boy Chetwood a great deal smarter than other people thought him. And—as was natural, too—Chet developed something like keenness in the sunshine of her approval.

"You know, mother," he said, on this evening of the arrival of Carolyn May, "I never *have* seen any great chance to rise, workin' for Mr. Joseph Stagg.

His ain't a business that offers an aspirin' feller much advancement."

"But he *pays* you, Chet," his mother said anxiously.

"Yep. I know. Don't be afraid I'll leave him till I see something better," he reassured her. "But I might be clerkin' for him till the cows come home and never see more'n six or eight dollars a week. But now it's apt to be different."

"How different, Chet?" she asked, puzzled.

"You know Mr. Stagg's as hard as nails—as hard as the goods he sells," declared the gawky boy. "No brass hinge, or iron bolt, or copper rivet in his stock is any harder than he 'pears to be. Mind you, he don't do nothin' mean. That ain't his way. But he don't seem to have a mite of interest in anything but his shop. Now, it seems to me, this little niece is bound to wake him up. He calls her 'Hannah's Car'lyn.'"

"Hannah Stagg was his only sister," said Mrs. Gormley softly. "I remember her."

"And she's just died, or something, and left this little girl," Chet continued. "Mr. Stagg's bound to think of something now besides business. And mebbe he'll need *me* more. And I'll get a chance to show him I'm worth something to him. So, by-and-by, he'll put me forward in the business," said the boy, his homely face glowing. "Who knows? Mebbe it'll be Stagg & Gormley over the door one of these days. Stranger things have happened."

"Wouldn't that be fine, Chet!" agreed his mother, taking fire at last from his enthusiasm. "And you think this pretty little girl's comin' here is goin' to do all that?"

Perhaps even Chetwood's assurance would have been quenched had he just then known the thoughts in the hardware merchant's mind. Mr. Stagg sat in his back office poring over the letter written by his brother-in-law's lawyer friend, a part of which read:

"From the above recital of facts you will plainly see, being a man of business yourself, that Mr. Cameron's financial affairs were in a much worse condition when he went away than he himself dreamed of.

"I immediately looked up the Stonebridge Building and Loan Association. It is even more moribund than the papers state. The fifteen hundred dollars Mr. Cameron put into it from time to time might just as well have been dropped into the sea.

"You know, he had only his salary on *The Morning Beacon*. They were rather decent to him, when they saw his health breaking down, to offer him the chance of going to the Mediterranean as correspondent. He was to furnish articles on 'The Débris of a World War'—stories of the peaceful sections of Europe which have to care for the human wrecks from the battlefields.

"It rather cramped Mr. Cameron's immediate resources for your sister to go with him, and he drew ahead on his expense and salary account. I know that Mrs. Cameron feared to allow him to go alone across the ocean. He was really in a bad way; but she proposed to come back immediately on the *Dunraven* if he improved on the voyage across.

"Their means really did not allow of their taking the child; the steamship company would not hear of a half-fare for her. She is a nice little girl, and my wife would have been glad to keep her longer, but in the end she would have to go to you, as, I understand, there are no other relatives.

"Of course, the flat is here, and the furniture. If you do not care to come on to attend to the matter yourself, I will do the best I can to dispose of either or both. Mr. Cameron had paid a year's rent in advance—rather an unwise thing, I thought—and the term has still ten months to run. He did it so that his wife, on her return from abroad, might have no worry on her mind. Perhaps the flat might be sublet, furnished, to advantage. You might state your pleasure regarding this.

"You will see, by the copy of your brother-in-law's will that I enclose, that you have been left in full and sole possession and guardianship of his property and affairs, including Carolyn May."

And if somebody had shipped him a crocodile from the Nile, Joseph Stagg would have felt little

more at a loss as to what disposal to make of the creature than he felt now regarding his little niece.

"Well—she'll be a nuisance; an awful nuisance," was his final comment, with a mountainous sigh.

Thus far, Aunty Rose Kennedy's attitude towards the little stranger had been the single pleasant disappointment Mr. Stagg had experienced. Aunty Rose was an autocrat. Joseph Stagg had never been so comfortable in his life as since Mrs. Kennedy had taken up the management of his home. But he stood in great awe of her.

He put the lawyer's letter in the safe. For once he was unable to respond to a written communication promptly. Although he wore that band of crêpe on his arm, he could not actually realise the fact that his sister Hannah was dead.

Any time these fifteen years he might have run down to New York to see her. First, she had worked in the newspaper office as a stenographer. Then she had married John Lewis Cameron, and they had gone immediately to housekeeping.

Cameron was a busy man; he held a "desk job" on the paper. Vacations had been hard to get. And, before long, Hannah had written about her baby—"Hannah's Car'lyn."

After the little one's arrival there seemed less chance than before for the city family to get up to Sunrise Cove. But at any time he might have gone to them. If Joseph Stagg had shut up his store for

a week and gone to New York, it would not have brought the world to an end.

Nor was it because he was stingy that he had not done this. No, he was no miser. But he was fairly buried in his business. And there was no "look up" in that dim little office in the back of the hardware store. His nose was in the big ledger all the time, and there was no better or brighter outlook for him.

Business. No other interest, social or spiritual, had Joseph Stagg. To his mind, time was wasted, used in any but the three very necessary ways—eating, sleeping, and attending to one's business.

He kept his store open every evening. Not because there was trade enough to warrant it—that was only on Saturday nights—but what would he do if he did not come down after supper and sit in his office for a couple of hours? There he could always find work to do. Outside, he was at a loss for something with which to occupy his mind.

On this evening he closed the store later than usual, and set out for The Corners slowly. To tell the truth, Mr. Stagg rather shrank from arriving home. The strangeness of having a child in the house disturbed his tranquillity.

The kitchen only was lighted when he approached; therefore, he was reassured. He knew Hannah's Car'lyn must have been put to bed long since.

It was dark under the trees, and only long familiarity with the walk enabled him to reach the back porch noiselessly. Then it was that something scram-

bled up in the dark, and the roar of a dog's barking made Joseph Stagg leap back in fright.

"Drat that mongrel!" he ejaculated, remembering Prince.

The kitchen door opened, revealing Aunty Rose's ample figure. Prince whined sheepishly and dropped his abbreviated tail, going to lie down again at the extreme end of his leash, and blinking his eyes at Mr. Stagg.

"The critter's as savage as a bear!" grumbled the hardware merchant.

"He is a good watchdog; you must allow that, Joseph Stagg," Aunty Rose said calmly.

The hardware dealer gasped again. It would be hard to say which had startled him the most—the dog or Aunty Rose's manner.

CHAPTER V

AUNTY ROSE UNBENDS

THERE never was a lovelier place for a little girl—to say nothing of a dog—to play in than the yard about the Stagg homestead; and this Carolyn May confided to Aunty Rose one forenoon after her arrival at The Corners.

Behind the house the yard sloped down to a broad, calmly flowing brook. Here the goose and duck pens were fenced off, for Aunty Rose would not allow the web-footed fowl to wander at large, as did the other poultry.

It was difficult for Prince to learn that none of these feathered folk were to be molested. He loved to jump into the water after a stick, and whenever he did so, the quacking and hissing inside the wire-fenced runs showed just how unpopular his dogship was in that community.

There was a wide-branching oak tree on a knoll overlooking the brook. Around its trunk Uncle Joe had built a seat. Carolyn May found this a grand place to sit and dream, while Prince lay at her feet with his pink tongue out, occasionally snapping at a gnat.

When they saw Aunty Rose, in her sunbonnet,

going towards the fenced-in garden, they both jumped up and bounded down the slope after her. It was just here, at the corner of the garden fence, that Carolyn May had her first adventure.

Prince, of course, disturbed the serenity of the poultry. The hens went shrieking one way, the guinea fowl lifted up their voices in angry chatter, the turkey hens scurried to cover, but the old turkey cock, General Bolivar, a big, white Holland fowl, was not to have his dignity disturbed and his courage impugned by any four-footed creature with waggish ears and the stump of a tail.

Therefore, General Bolivar charged with outspread wings and quivering fan. His eyesight was not good, however. He charged the little girl instead of the roistering dog.

Carolyn May frankly screamed. Thirty-five pounds, or more, of solid meat, frame, and feathers catapulted through the air at one is not to be ignored. Had the angry turkey reached the little girl, he would have beaten her down, and perhaps seriously injured her.

He missed her the first time, but turned to charge again. Prince barked loudly, circling around the bristling turkey cock, undecided just how to get into the battle. But Aunty Rose knew no fear of anything wearing feathers.

"Scat, you brute!" she cried, and made a grab for the turkey, gripping him with her left hand behind his head, bearing his long neck downward.

In her other hand she seized a piece of lath, and with it chastised the big turkey across the haunches with vigour.

"Oh, don't spank him any more, Aunty Rose!" gasped Carolyn May at last. "He *must* be sorry."

With a final stroke Aunty Rose allowed the big fowl to go—and he ran away fast enough. But the austere Mrs. Kennedy did not consider the matter ended there. She had punished one culprit; now she turned to Prince.

"Your dog, child, does not know his manners. If he is going to stay here with you, he must learn that fowl are not to be chased nor startled."

"Oh, Aunty Rose!" begged the little girl, "*don't* punish Prince! Not—not that way. Please, don't! Why, he's never been spanked in his life! He wouldn't know what it meant. *Dear* Aunty Rose——"

"I shall not beat him, Car'lyn May," interrupted Aunty Rose. "But he must learn his lesson. He has never run at liberty in his life before, as he does here, I warrant."

"Oh, no, ma'am; he never has. Only in the park early in the morning. Papa used to take him out for a run before he went to bed. The policemen didn't mind if Prince *was* off his leash then."

"'Before he went to bed?'" repeated Aunty Rose curiously. "What time did your papa go to bed, pray?"

"Why, he worked on a morning paper, you see,

and he didn't get home till 'most sunrise—in summer, I mean. He slept in the forenoon."

"Oh, such a way to live!" murmured Aunty Rose, scandalised. Then she returned to the subject of Prince's punishment. "Your dog must learn that liberty is not license. Bring him here, Car'lyn May."

She led the way to an open coop of laths in the middle of the back yard. This was a hutch in which she put broody hens when she wished to break up their desire to set. She opened the gate of it and motioned Prince to enter.

The dog looked pleadingly at his little mistress' face, then into the woman's stern countenance. Seeing no reprieve in either, with drooping tail he slunk into the cage.

With one hand clutching her frock over her heart, Carolyn May's big blue eyes overflowed.

"It's just as if he was arrested," she said. "Poor Prince! Has he got to stay there *always*, Aunty Rose?"

"He'll stay till he learns his lesson," said Mrs. Kennedy grimly, and went on into the garden.

Carolyn May sat down close to the side of the cage, thrust one hand between the slats, and held one of the dog's front paws. She had hoped to go into the garden to help Aunty Rose pick peas, but she could not bear to leave Prince alone.

By-and-by Mrs. Kennedy came up from the garden, her pan heaped with pods. She looked neither in the direction of the prisoner nor at his little mis-

tress. Carolyn May wanted awfully to shell the peas. She liked to shell peas, and Aunty Rose had more in her pan than the little girl had ever shelled at one time at home.

Prince whined and lay down. He had begun to realise now that this was no play, at all, but punishment. He blinked his eyes at Carolyn May and looked as sorry as ever a dog with cropped ears and an abbreviated tail could look.

The hutch was under a wide-branching tree. It was shady, and the bees hummed. A motherly hen with thirteen black chickens paraded by.

"I wonder," thought Carolyn May dozily, "how the mother can be so white and her family can be so black. I believe there must be a mistake somewhere. Suppose they shouldn't turn out to be chickens at all, but crows! Maybe she was fooled about the eggs. You often *are* fooled about eggs, you know. You can't tell by the outside of an eggshell whether what's inside is fresh or not.

"And if those are little crows, and not chicks, they'll fly right up into the air some day and leave her, and go sailing off across the brook, saying, 'Caw! Caw! Caw!'

"Why, there they go now!" gasped Carolyn May—only, she *thought* she gasped, just as she *thought* she saw the baker's dozen of chicks flying across the brook—for she was fast asleep and dreaming.

Prince slept, too, and fought imaginary battles

with the turkey cock in his dreams, jerking all four of his legs, and growling dreadfully. Carolyn May went wandering through fairyland, perhaps following the chicken-crows she had first imagined.

The peas and potatoes were cooking for dinner when Aunty Rose appeared again. There was the little girl, all of a dewy sleep, lying on the grass by the prison-pen. Aunty Rose would have released Prince, but, though he wagged his stump of a tail at her and yawned and blinked, she had still her doubts regarding a mongrel's good nature.

She could not allow the child to sleep there, however; so, stooping, picked up Carolyn May and carried her comfortably into the house, laying her down on the sitting-room couch to have her nap out—as she supposed, without awakening her.

It had been many a long day since Aunty Rose Kennedy had stood over a sleeping child and watched the silky eyelashes flutter and the breath part the rosy lips ever so little. Carolyn May's limbs were dimpled; her golden hair was wavy, though it did not curl; she was sweet and lovable in every way.

Aunty Rose came away softly and closed the door, and while she finished getting dinner she tried to make no noise which would awaken the child.

Mr. Stagg came home at noon, quite as full of business as usual. To tell the truth, Mr. Stagg always felt bashful in Aunty Rose's presence; and he tried to hide his affliction by conversation. So he talked steadily through the meal.

But somewhere—about at the pie course, it was—he stopped and looked around curiously.

"Bless me!" he exclaimed, "where's Hannah's Car'lyn?"

"Taking a nap," said Aunty Rose composedly.

"Hum! can't the child get up to her victuals?" demanded Mr. Stagg. "You begin serving that young one separately and you'll make yourself work, Aunty Rose."

"Never trouble about that which doesn't concern you, Joseph Stagg," responded his housekeeper rather tartly. "The Lord has placed the care of Hannah's Car'lyn on you and me, and I shall do my share, and do it proper."

Mr. Stagg shook his head and lost interest in his wedge of berry pie. "There are institutions—" he began weakly; but Aunty Rose said quickly:

"Joseph Stagg! I know you for what you are—other people don't. If the neighbours heard you say *that,* they'd think you were a heathen. Your own sister's child!

"Now, you send Tim, the hackman, up after me this afternoon. I've got to go shopping. The child hasn't a thing to wear but that fancy little black frock, and she'll ruin that playing around. She's got to have frocks, and shoes, and another hat—all sorts of things. Seems a shame to dress a child like her in black—it's punishment. Makes her affliction double, I do say."

"Well, I suppose we've got to flatter Custom, or

Custom will weep," growled Mr. Stagg. "But where the money's coming from——"

"Didn't Car'lyn's pa leave her none?" asked Aunty Rose promptly.

"Well—not what you'd call a fortune," admitted Mr. Stagg slowly.

"Thanks be, you've got plenty, then. And if you haven't, I have," said the woman in a tone that quite closed the question of finances.

"Which shows me just where I get off at," muttered Joseph Stagg as he started down the walk for the store. "I knew that young one would be a nuisance."

CHAPTER VI

MR. JEDIDIAH PARLOW

CAROLYN MAY, who was quite used to taking a nap on the days that she did not go to school, woke up, as bright as a newly minted dollar, very soon after her Uncle Joe left for the store.

"I'm awfully sorry I missed him," she confided to Aunty Rose when she danced into the kitchen. "You see, I want to get acquainted with Uncle Joe just as fast as possible. And he's at home so little, I guess that it's going to be hard to do it."

"Oh, is that so? And is it going to be hard to get acquainted with me?" asked the housekeeper curiously.

"Oh, no!" cried Carolyn May, snuggling up to the good woman and patting her plump, bare arm. "Why, I'm getting 'quainted with *you* fast, Aunty Rose! You heard me say my prayers, and when you laid me down on the couch just now you kissed me."

Aunty Rose actually blushed. "There, there, child!" she exclaimed. "You're too noticing. Eat your dinner, that I've saved warm for you."

"Isn't Prince to have any dinner, Aunty Rose?" asked the little girl.

"You may let him out, if you wish, after you have had your own dinner. You can feed him under the tree. But stand by and keep the hens away, for hens haven't any more morals than they have teeth, and they'll steal from him. I don't want him to snap any of their heads off before they're ready for the pot."

"Oh, Aunty Rose," said Carolyn May seriously, "he's too polite. He wouldn't do such a thing. Really, you don't know yet what a *good* dog Prince is."

Carolyn May was very much excited about an hour later when a rusty, closed hack drew up to the front gate of the Stagg place and stopped. She and Prince were then playing in the front yard—at least, she was stringing maple keys into a long, long chain (a delight heretofore unknown to the little city girl), and the dog was watching her with wrinkling nose and blinking eyes.

An old man with a square-cut chin whisker and clothing and hat as rusty as the hack itself held the reins over the bony back of the horse that drew the ancient equipage.

"I say, young'un, ain't ye out o' yer bailiwick?" queried Tim, the hackman, staring at the little girl in the Stagg yard.

Carolyn May stood up quickly and tried to look over her shoulder and down her back. It *was* hard to get all those buttons buttoned straight.

"I don't know," she said, perturbed. "Does it show?"

"Huh?" grunted Tim. "Does what show?"

"What you said," said Carolyn May accusingly. "I don't believe it does."

"Hey!" chuckled the hack driver suddenly. "I meant, do you 'low Mrs. Kennedy knows you're playing in her front yard?"

"Aunty Rose? Why, of course!" Carolyn May declared. "Don't you know I *live* here?"

"Live here? Get out!" exclaimed the surprised hackman.

"Yes, sir. And Prince, too. With my Uncle Joe and Aunty Rose."

"Pitcher of George Washington!" ejaculated Tim. "You don't mean Joe Stagg's taken a young-'un to board?"

"He's my guardian," said the little girl primly.

"'Guardian'?" repeated the hackman, puzzled. "You don't mean you're one o' them fresh-airs, be ye?"

Carolyn May was quite as much puzzled by that expression as she had been by "bailiwick." She shook her head.

"I don't think I am," she confessed. "Mrs. Price said I was an orphan. Is that anything like a fresh-air?"

"Most of them is," the hackman said sententiously. "But here's Mrs. Kennedy."

Aunty Rose appeared. She wore a close bonnet,

trimmed very plainly, and carried a parasol of drab silk. Otherwise, she had not changed her usual attire, save to remove the voluminous apron she wore when at her housework.

"I would take you with me, child," she said, looking at Carolyn May, "only I don't know what to do with that dog. I suppose he would tear the house down if we shut him in?"

"I expect so," admitted the little girl.

"And if he was outside, he would follow the hack?"

"Yes, ma'am," agreed Carolyn May again.

"Then you'll have to stay at home and watch him," said Aunty Rose decisively. "I always claimed a dog was a nuisance."

Between Uncle Joe and Aunty Rose, both of the visitors at the Stagg place were proving to be nuisances.

Aunty Rose climbed into the creaky old vehicle.

"Are you going to be gone long?" asked Carolyn May politely.

"Not more than two hours, child," said the housekeeper. "Nobody will bother you here——"

"Not while that dog's with her, I reckon," put in Tim, the hackman.

"May I come down the road to meet you, Aunty Rose?" asked the little girl. "I know the way to Uncle Joe's store."

"I don't know any reason why you can't come to meet me," replied Mrs. Kennedy. "Anyway, you

can come along the road as far as the first house. You know that one?"

"Yes, ma'am. Mr. Parlow's," said Carolyn May.

"She knows her way 'round, I warrant," put in Tim.

"Very well, child," said Aunty Rose, and the bony old horse started slowly down the dusty road. Carolyn May stood at the gate and watched it wabble away. The hush of the afternoon wrapped the place about. Such a stir as there had been about The Corners in the forenoon seemed to have been quite quenched. Not even the clank of iron on iron from the blacksmith shop was now audible.

Carolyn May went back into the yard and sat on the front-porch steps, and Prince, yawning unhappily, curled down at her feet. There did not seem to be much to do at this place. The little girl lost interest in the maple-key chain which Aunty Rose had shown her how to make.

She had time now, had Carolyn May, to compare The Corners with the busy Harlem streets with which she had been familiar all her life. At this time of the afternoon the shady sides of the cross streets and the west side of the avenues were a-bustle with baby carriages and children, with nurses and mothers. And there were street pianos, and penny peep shows, and ice-cream-cone peddlers, and wagons, and many automobiles.

"Goodness me!" thought Carolyn May, startled

by her own imagination, "suppose all the folks in all these houses around here were *dead!*"

They might have been, for all the human noises she heard. She could count seven dwellings from where she sat on the Stagg porch, and there were others not in sight. No apparent life at the blacksmith shop; none at the store. Not even a vehicle on the road, now that the hack had crawled out of view towards Sunrise Cove.

"Goodness me!" she said again, and this time she jumped up, startling Prince from his nap. "Maybe there is a spell cast over all this place," she went on. "Everybody has been put to sleep, just like in a fairy story. I don't know whether a little girl who *isn't* asleep can wake 'em up, or whether it must be a prince.

"Why, Princey," she added, looking at the dog, "maybe it will be *you* that wakes 'em up. Anyway, let's go and see if we can find *somebody* that's alive."

They went out of the yard together and took the dusty road towards the town. They passed the broad front of the church, its windows like so many blind eyes, and the little girl peered timidly over the rusty railing into the neglected churchyard, where many of the headstones were moss-grown and toppling.

"This is just the very *deadest* place," murmured Carolyn May. "And I guess these folks buried here aren't much quieter than the live folks. Oh,

dear me! these folks here at The Corners don't look up to brighter things any more than the folks that are under ground. Why, maybe *I'll* get that way if I stay here! And I know Papa Cameron wouldn't approve of *that!*"

She sighed, and trudged on in the dust. The perspiration began to trickle down her pink face. The powdery dust rose from beneath her feet and was drifted over the wayside grass and weeds by the fretful breeze.

Prince paced on by her side, his nose wrinkling at the strange odours the breeze brought to his nostrils. A toad hopped suddenly out of its ambuscade beside the path, and Prince jumped.

"Don't touch the toad, Princey," said the little girl. "You know we learned about toads at school —and how good they are. And there was one in Central Park—don't you 'member?"

A minute later, however, as they went on, something flashed into view on the top rail of the boundary fence. It brought a yelp of delight from Prince and a startled cry to Carolyn May's lips.

"A squirrel!"

Prince leaped for the fence. With a whisk of its tail, the squirrel went up the bole of the nearest tree, and out on one of the branches, right over their heads.

Prince danced about madly in the dust and yelped.

"You silly thing, you," the little girl told him. "You *know* you can't climb that tree."

The squirrel chattered angrily overhead.

"Now, come away," Carolyn May commanded. "Don't you see you've made that squirrel mad at you? You'll *never* make friends out here in the country, if you act this way, Princey."

Prince seemed little impressed by this prophecy, but he followed after his little mistress and left the squirrel to its own devices. They soon came in sight of the Parlow house and carpenter shop.

"We can't go beyond that," said Carolyn May. "Aunty Rose told us not to. And Uncle Joe says the carpenter-man isn't a pleasant man."

She looked wistfully at the premises. The cottage seemed quite as much under the "spell" as had been those dwellings at The Corners. But from the shop came the sound of a plane shrieking over a long board.

"Oh, Princey!" gasped Carolyn May. "I b'lieve he's making long, curly shavings!"

If there was one thing Carolyn May adored, it was curls. Because her own sunny hair was almost perfectly straight, she thought the very loveliest thing a fairy godmother could do for her was to fit her out with a perfect suit of curls.

There had been a carpenter shop only two blocks from where she lived in Harlem, and she and her friend, Edna Price, had sometimes gone there and begged a few curly shavings with which to bedeck themselves. But they could never get as many shavings as they wanted there, for the man swept them up

every day and put them in bags, to be sold for baling.

But here, at this carpenter's shop, she had seen, only the afternoon before, great heaps of the most beautiful, curly, smelly shavings! She drew nearer, her hand upon Prince's collar, and stood looking at the old man with the silver-bowed spectacles pushing away at the jack-plane.

Suddenly, Mr. Jedidiah Parlow looked up and saw the wistful, dust-streaked face under the black hat-brim and above the black frock. He stared at her for fully a minute, poising the plane over his work. Then he put it down and came to the door of the shop.

"You're Hannah Stagg's little girl, aren't you?" he asked in a voice Carolyn May thought almost as dry as his shavings.

"Yes, sir," she said, and sighed. Dear me, he knew who she was right away! There would not be any chance of her getting a suit of long curls.

"You've come here to live, have you?" said Mr. Parlow slowly.

"Yes, sir. You see, my papa and mamma were lost at sea—with the *Dunraven*. It was a mistake, I guess," sighed the little girl, "for they weren't fighting anybody. But the *Dunraven* got in the way of some ships that were fighting, in a place called the Mediterranean Ocean, and the *Dunraven* was sunk, and only a few folks were saved from it. My papa and mamma weren't saved."

"So?" said the carpenter, pushing his big spectacles up to his forehead. "I read about it. Too bad—too mighty bad! I remember Hannah Stagg," he added, winking his eyes, Carolyn May thought, a good deal as Prince did. "You look like her."

"Do I?" Carolyn May returned, drawing nearer. "I'm glad I do. And I'm glad I sleep in what used to be her bed, too. It doesn't seem so lonesome."

"So? I reckoned you'd be lonesome up there at The Corners," said the carpenter. "Is that your dog?"

"He's Prince—yes, sir," Carolyn May said, looking at the panting mongrel proudly. "He's a *splendid* dog. I know he must be valuable, even if he is a mongorel. He got his paw hurt once, and papa and I took him to a vetrernary.

"A vetrernary," explained Carolyn May, "is a dog doctor. And I heard this one tell my papa that there must be blood of 'most all kinds of dogs there was in Prince's veins. There aren't many dogs like him."

"No, I reckon not. Not many have such a pedigree," admitted the carpenter, taking up his plane. Then he squinted curiously across it at Carolyn May. "I guess your papa was some different from Joe Stagg, wasn't he?"

"Oh, yes; he didn't look much like Uncle Joe. You see, they aren't really related," explained Carolyn May innocently.

Mr. Parlow grunted and stripped another shaving

from the edge of the board he was planing. Carolyn May's eager eyes followed that curling ribbon, and her lips parted. There were just *bushels* of shavings lying all about the shop—and Uncle Joe said Mr. Parlow would not give away a single one!

The carpenter paused before pushing the plane a second time the length of the board. "Don't you want a drink of water, little girl?" he asked.

"Oh, yes, sir—I would. And I know Prince would like a drink," she told him quickly.

"Go right around to the well in the back yard," said Mr. Parlow. "You'll find a glass there—and Mandy keeps a pan on the well-curb for the dogs and cats."

"Thank you; I'll go," the little girl said, and started around by the green lane to the yard behind the cottage and the carpenter shop.

She hoped she would see Miss Amanda Parlow; but she saw nobody. The well was like the one in the Stagg back yard—it had a sweep and a smooth pole and chain that lowered the bucket into the depth of the shaft.

But it seemed as though somebody must have known the little girl was coming, for a dripping bucket of water had just been lifted upon the shelf, and the pan on the well-curb was filled. Prince lapped up the water from this eagerly.

All the time Carolyn May was getting her drink she felt she was being watched. She gazed frankly all about, but saw nobody. The green blinds were

tightly closed over the cottage windows; yet the child wondered if somebody inside was not looking out at her. Was it the nice-looking lady she had seen the day before—Miss Amanda, who would not look at Uncle Joe?

She went back to the door of the carpenter shop and found Mr. Parlow still busily at work.

"Seems to me," he said, in his dry voice, after a little while, "you aren't much like other little girls."

"Aren't I?" responded Carolyn May wonderingly.

"No. Most little girls that come here want shavings to play with," said the carpenter, quizzically eyeing her over his work.

"Oh!" cried Carolyn May, almost jumping. "And do you give 'em to 'em?"

"'Most always," admitted Mr. Parlow.

"Oh! Can *I* have some?" she gasped.

"All you want," said Mr. Parlow, and perhaps that funny noise he made in his throat was as near to a laugh as he ever got.

When Tim's old hack crawled along the road from town, with Aunty Rose sitting inside, enthroned amidst a multitude of bundles, Carolyn May was bedecked with a veritable wig of long, crisp curls, each carefully thrust under the brim of her hat. And when she shook the curls, Prince barked at her.

"Well, child, you certainly have made a mess of yourself," said the housekeeper. "Has she been annoying you, Jedidiah Parlow?"

" She's the only Stagg that ain't annoyed me since her mother went away," said the carpenter gruffly.

Aunty Rose looked at him levelly. " I wonder," she said. " But, you see, she isn't wholly a Stagg."

This, of course, did not explain matters to Carolyn May in the least. Nor did what Aunty Rose said to her on the way home in the hot, stuffy hack help the little girl to understand the trouble between her uncle and Mr. Parlow.

" Better not let Joseph Stagg see you so friendly with Jedidiah Parlow. Let sleeping dogs lie," Mrs. Kennedy observed.

CHAPTER VII

A TRAGIC SITUATION

SUCH was the introduction of Carolyn May to The Corners. It was not a very exciting life she had entered into, but the following two or three weeks were very full.

Aunty Rose insisted upon her being properly fitted out with clothing for the summer and fall. Mrs. Price sent on by express certain of the child's possessions that would be useful, but Aunty Rose declared the local seamstress must make a number of dresses for Carolyn May. The latter had to go to the dressmaker's house to be fitted, and that is how she became acquainted with Chet Gormley's mother.

Mrs. Gormley was helping the dressmaker, and they both made much of Carolyn May. Aunty Rose allowed her to go for her fittings alone—of course, with Prince as a companion—so, without doubt, Mrs. Gormley, who loved a " dish of gossip," talked more freely with the little girl than she would have done in Mrs. Kennedy's presence.

One afternoon the little girl appeared at the dressmaker's (it was only two houses nearer the centre of Sunrise Cove than the Parlow cottage)

with Prince's collar decorated with short, curly shavings. This Elizabethan ruff may or may not have caused the dog to look "extinguished," as Carolyn May pointed out, but it certainly made him uncomfortable. However, he endured this dressing-up to please his little mistress.

"I take it you've stopped at Jed Parlow's shop, child," said Mrs. Gormley with a sigh.

"Yes, ma'am," returned Carolyn May. "Do you know, he's very lib'ral."

"'Lib'ral'?" repeated Mrs. Gormley. "I never heard of old Jed Parlow bein' accused of that before. Did you, Mrs. Maine?"

Mrs. Maine was the dressmaker; and she bit off her words when she spoke, much as she bit off her threads.

"No. I never—heard Jed Parlow—called that—no!" declared Mrs. Maine emphatically.

"Why, yes," little Carolyn May said quite eagerly, "he gives me all the shavings I want. I—I guess folks don't just understand about Mr. Parlow," she added, remembering what her uncle had first said about the carpenter. "He *is* real lib'ral."

"It's a wonder to me," drawled Mrs. Gormley, "that he has a thing to do with *a certain party*, Mrs. Maine, considerin' how his daughter feels towards that *certain party's* relation. What d'you think?"

"I guess—there's sumpin—to be said—on both sides—o' that controversy," responded the dressmaker.

"Meanin' that mebbe *a certain party's* relative feels just as cross as Mandy Parlow?" suggested Mrs. Gormley.

"Yep," agreed the other woman, biting off her answer and her thread at the same instant.

Carolyn May listened, much puzzled. She wondered just who "a certain party" could be. It sounded very mysterious.

Mrs. Maine was called away upon some household task, and Mrs. Gormley seemed to change the subject of conversation.

"Don't your uncle, Mr. Stagg, ever speak to you about Mandy Parlow?" she asked the little girl.

Carolyn May had to think about this before answering. Then she remembered.

"Oh, yes," she said brightly.

"He does? Do tell!" exclaimed Mrs. Gormley eagerly. "What does he say?"

"Why, he says her name is *Miss* Amanda Parlow."

Mrs. Gormley flushed rather oddly and glanced at the child with suspicion. But little Carolyn May was perfectly frank and ingenuous.

"Humph!" ejaculated Chet's mother. "He never says nothing about bein' in love with Mandy, does he? They was goin' with each other steady once."

The little girl looked puzzled.

"When folks love each other they look at each other and talk to each other, don't they?" she asked.

"Well—yes—generally," admitted Mrs. Gormley.

"Then my Uncle Joe and Miss Amanda Parlow aren't in love," announced Carolyn May with confidence, "for they don't even look at each other."

"They used to. Why, Joseph Stagg and Mandy Parlow was sweethearts years and years ago! Long before your mother left these parts, child."

"That was a long time 'fore I was borned," said the little girl wonderingly.

"Oh, yes. Everybody that went to The Corners' church thought they'd be married."

"My Uncle Joe and Miss Mandy?"

"Yes."

"Then, what would have become of Aunty Rose?" queried Carolyn May.

"Oh, Mrs. Kennedy hadn't gone to keep house for Mr. Stagg then," replied Mrs. Gormley. "He tried sev'ral triflin' critters there at the Stagg place before she took hold."

Carolyn May looked at Mrs. Gormley encouragingly. She was very much interested in Uncle Joe and Miss Amanda Parlow's love affair.

"*Why* didn't they get married—like my papa and mamma?" she asked.

"Oh, goodness knows!" exclaimed Mrs. Gormley. "Some says 'twas his fault and some says 'twas hern. And mebbe 'twas a third party's that I might mention, at *that,*" added Mrs. Gormley, pursing up her lips in a very knowing way.

Here was another mysterious " party "! Carolyn May wondered if this " party " could be related to the " certain party " who seemed so familiar to both of the " dressmaking ladies."

" You couldn't get nothin' out of either Mr. Stagg or Mandy about it, I don't believe. They're both as tight-mouthed as clams," pursued Mrs. Gormley. " But one day," she said, growing confidential, " it was in camp-meeting time—one day somebody seen Joe Stagg drivin' out with another girl—Charlotte Lenny, that was. *She* was married to a man over in Springdale long ago. Mr. Stagg took Charlotte to Faith Camp Meeting.

" Then, the very next week, Mandy went with Evan Peckham to a barn dance at Crockett's, and nobody ain't ever seen your uncle and Mandy Parlow speak since, much less ever walk together.

" Now stand up, child, and let's see if this frock fits. I declare, your uncle is a-fittin' you out right nice."

If the truth were told, Uncle Joe did not agree to the making of all these " frocks and furbelows " for Hannah's Car'lyn without the filing of some objections.

" I tell you, Aunty Rose," he said to his austere housekeeper (and it took courage for him to say this), " I tell you the child will get it into her head that she can *always* have all these things. Her father didn't leave anything—scarcely any money at all. I don't suppose, if I sell out that flat, I'd get a hundred

dollars for it. How are all these frocks and furbelows going to be paid for?"

"You can stop in at the First National, Joseph Stagg, and draw enough out of my account to pay for them," said Aunty Rose placidly.

"Huh? I guess not!" ejaculated the hardware dealer angrily. "I can pay my just debts yet, I hope—and them of Hannah's Car'lyn, too. If there's money got to be spent on the child, I'm the one to spend it."

"Then don't talk as though you were afraid the sheriff was going to tack a notice on your store door to-morrow morning," returned the old lady tartly. To herself she observed, out of his hearing: "It will do Joseph Stagg good to learn to spend money, as well as to make it."

But Mr. Stagg did not take kindly to this, nor to other innovations that the coming of Carolyn May to The Corners brought about. Especially was he outspoken about Prince. That faithful follower of "Hannah's Car'lyn" he failed to discover any use for or any good in.

Prince was a friendly creature, and he did not always display good judgment in showing his affection. In his doggish mind he could not see why Mr. Stagg did not like him; he approved of Mr. Stagg very much indeed.

One particularly muddy day he met the returning hardware merchant at the gate with vociferous barkings and a plain desire to implant a welcoming tongue

on the man's cheek. He succeeded in muddying Mr. Stagg's suit with his front paws, and almost cast the angry man full length into a mud puddle.

"Drat the beast!" ejaculated Mr. Stagg. "I'd rather have an epileptic fit loose around here than him. Now, look at these clo'es! I declare, Car'lyn, you've jest got to tie that mongrel up—and keep him tied!"

"All the time, Uncle Joe?" whispered the little girl.

"Yes, *ma'am,* all the time! If I find him loose again, I'll tie a bag of rocks to his neck and drop him in the deepest hole in the brook. He'd oughter been drowned by that man when he was a pup."

After this awful threat, Prince lived a precarious existence, and his mistress was much worried for him. Never, when Uncle Joe was at home, could the dog have a run. Aunty Rose said nothing, but she saw that both the little girl and her canine friend were very unhappy.

Mrs. Kennedy, however, had watched Mr. Joseph Stagg for years. Indeed, she had known him as a boy, long before she had closed up her own little cottage around on the other road and come to the Stagg place to save the hardware merchant from the continued reign of those "trifling creatures" of whom Mrs. Gormley had spoken.

As a bachelor, Joseph Stagg had been preyed upon by certain female harpies so prevalent in a country community. Some had families whom they

partly supported out of Mr. Stagg's larder; some were widows who looked upon the well-to-do merchant as a marrying proposition.

Aunty Rose Kennedy did not need the position of Mr. Stagg's housekeeper and could not be accused of assuming it from mercenary motives. Over her back fence she had seen the havoc going on in the Stagg homestead after Hannah Stagg went to the city and Joseph Stagg's final female relative had died and left him alone in the big house.

One day the old Quaker-like woman could stand no more. She put on her sunbonnet, came around by the road to the front door of the Stagg house, which she found open, and walked through to the rear porch on which the woman who then held the situation of housekeeper was wrapping up the best feather bed and pillows in a pair of the best home-spun sheets, preparatory to their removal.

The neighbours enjoyed what followed. Aunty Rose came through the ordeal as dignified and unruffled as ever; the retiring incumbent went away wrathfully, shaking the dust of the premises from her garments as a testimony against "any sich actions."

When Mr. Stagg came home at supper time he found Aunty Rose at the helm and already a different air about the place.

"Goodness me, Aunty Rose," he said, biting into her biscuit ravenously, "I was a-going down to the

mill-hands' hotel to board. I couldn't stand it no longer. If you'd stay here and do for me, I'd feel like a new man."

"You ought to be made over into a new man, Joseph Stagg," the woman said sternly. "A married man."

"No, no! Never *that!*" gasped the hardware dealer.

"If I came here, Joseph Stagg, it would cost you more money than you've been paying these no-account women."

"I don't care," said Mr. Stagg recklessly. "Go ahead. Do what you please. Say what you want. I'm game."

Thereby he had put himself into Aunty Rose's power. She had renovated the old kitchen and some of the other rooms. If Mr. Stagg at first trembled for his bank balance, he was made so comfortable that he had not the heart to murmur. And, besides, he believed in keeping his word. He had declared himself "game."

But that had all happened years before. This matter of expense for Hannah's Car'lyn was an entirely different matter. Moreover, the mischievousness of Prince, the mongrel, was really more than Mr. Joseph Stagg thought he was called upon to bear.

Of course, Carolyn May let Prince run at large when she was sure Uncle Joe was well out of sight of the house, but she was very careful to chain him

up again long before her uncle was expected to return.

Prince had learned not to chase anything that wore feathers; Aunty Rose herself had to admit that he was a very intelligent dog and knew what punishment was for. But how did he know that in trying to dig out a mole he would be doing more harm than good?

The mole in question lived under a piece of rock wall near the garden fence. When let free for his first morning run, Prince had been much interested in the raised roofs of the tunnels he found in the sod down there.

Aunty Rose called the mole "a pesky creature." Uncle Joe had threatened to bring home a trap with which to impale it. How should Prince know—and this was the question Carolyn May asked afterwards—that he would not be considered a general benefactor if he managed to capture the little blind nuisance?

At any rate, when Uncle Joe came home to dinner on one particular Saturday he walked down to the corner of the garden fence, and there saw the havoc Prince had wrought. In following the line of the mole's last tunnel he had worked his way under the picket fence and had torn up two currant bushes and done some damage in the strawberry patch.

"And the worst of it is," grumbled the hardware dealer, "he never caught the mole. That mongrel really isn't worth a bag of dornicks to sink him in

the brook. But that's what he's going to get this very evening when I come home. I won't stand for him a day longer."

Carolyn May positively turned pale as she crouched beside the now chained-up Prince, both arms about his rough neck. He licked her cheek. Fortunately, he could not understand *everything* that was said to him, therefore the pronouncement of this terrible sentence did not agitate him an atom.

But his little mistress held to him tightly, dry sobs shaking her slight form. Uncle Joe went in to dinner with little appreciation of the horror and despair that filled the soul of Hannah's Car'lyn, out under the tree in the back yard.

CHAPTER VIII

MR. STAGG IS JUDGED

FIRST, of course, Carolyn May thought she would run away—she and Prince. She could not eat any dinner, although Aunty Rose called her twice and she did feel a little faint, for she possessed a hearty appetite. But the child knew that the very first mouthful she tried to swallow would choke her—and then she would cry.

Perhaps Aunty Rose understood this, for she did not trouble the little girl again. Carolyn May sat for a long time under the tree beside the sleeping dog and thought how different this life at The Corners was from that she had lived with her father and mother in the city home.

If only that big ship, the *Dunraven,* had not sailed away with her papa and her mamma!

Carolyn May had been very brave on that occasion. She had gone ashore with Mrs. Price and Edna after her mother's last clinging embrace and her father's husky "Good-bye, daughter," with scarcely a tear. She had watched the huge vessel sweep off from the dock and out into the stream, carried by the outgoing tide and helped by a fussy tug, which latter she had thought preposterously small to be of

any real service to such a huge craft as the *Dunraven.*

They had run to the very end of the pier, too; so as to see the last of the outgoing ship. Of course, the faces of her father and mother were lost to her vision in the crowd of other passengers, but her mother had waved her pink veil, as agreed, and Carolyn May could see that for a long while.

Of course, she had been brave! Mamma would return in a few weeks, and then, after a time, papa would likewise come back—and, oh! so rosy and stout! No more cough, no longer a feeble step, no longer breathless after he had climbed the two flights to their apartment.

These things the little girl, left behind, had fully understood. She looked forward confidently to the happy return of both her parents.

And then, in two weeks, came the fatal news of the sinking of the *Dunraven* and the loss of all but a small part of her crew and passengers. The steamer had gone down quickly, and in the night, with the dim coast of Africa far, far to the southward and many, many leagues of troubled sea between her grave and the Spanish coast.

The two warring vessels—which one had caused the sinking of the *Dunraven* would probably never be known—had not even discovered till daylight that there was a remnant of the *Dunraven's* company adrift on the sea. These were finally rescued by the victorious combatant, and in a heavy fog.

The exact spot where the *Dunraven* had sunk was not known.

Vaguely these facts had become known to Carolyn May. She never spoke of them. They did not seem real to the little girl. After all, she could not believe that her father and mother had gone on so long a journey that they would never again return to her.

But now, sitting beside the condemned Prince—her companion and only real comforter during these weeks of her orphanhood—the little girl felt bitterly her loneliness and grief.

If Uncle Joe did as he had threatened, what should she do? There seemed to be no place for her and Prince to run away to. She did not know her way about Sunrise Cove and The Corners. During the weeks she had lived here she had learned to know nobody well enough to fly to for protection, or of whom to beg shelter for herself and her dog.

She knew Mr. Stagg to be a very firm and determined man. Even Aunty Rose, who in most things guided affairs at the Stagg homestead, could go only so far. What Uncle Joe really determined to do, not even the austere housekeeper could balk. No, there seemed no escaping the awful tragedy that was to be. And if Prince had to die——

"I'm quite sure I don't want to live," thought Carolyn May dismally. "If papa, and mamma, and Prince are *all* dead—why! there aren't enough other folks left in the world to make it worth while living

She had watched the huge vessel sweep off from the dock

in, I don't believe. If Prince isn't going to be alive, then *I* don't want to be alive, either."

By-and-by Prince began to get very uneasy. It was long past his dinner hour, and every time he heard the screen door slam he jumped up and gazed eagerly and with cocked ears and wagging tail in that direction.

"You poor thing, you," said Carolyn May at last. "I s'pose you *are* hungry. It isn't going to do you a bit of good to eat; but you don't know it. I'll ask Aunty Rose if she has something for you."

She got up wearily and went across the yard. Aunty Rose stood just inside the screen door.

"Don't you want any dinner, Car'lyn May?" she asked.

"No, ma'am. I guess I'd better not eat," said the child.

"Why not?"

"'Cause my stomach's so trembly. I just *know* I couldn't keep anything down, even if I could swallow it. But Prince'll eat his, please. He—he don't know any better."

"Tut, tut!" murmured the woman. "He's the most sensible of the two of you, I declare."

But she did not urge Carolyn May to eat. There was a platter of broken meat and bread for the dog, and Prince ate with apparent thankfulness.

"But you wouldn't gobble that down so, if you knew what was going to happen to us, you poor dear," Carolyn May whispered.

Later she took Prince around the premises on his leash. She led him along the edge of the brook. The Stagg place bordered on both sides of the stream, and on the farther side were hayfields. Uncle Joe did not till any land save the garden in which the unhappy Prince had done such damage.

The little girl found, she believed, what must be the deepest hole in the brook. It was not far beyond the great, widely spreading tree on the knoll where she loved to sit. The water was brown and cloudy in this pool, and a trout jumped there and left a wake of bubbles behind him where he dived again with the luckless fly he had snapped out of the air.

"I wonder if that trout will stay there if you are drownd-ed right where he lives?" Carolyn May asked of Prince.

Prince wagged his abbreviated tail and yawned. Really, he seemed very little impressed by the tragic fate that overhung him. Perhaps Carolyn May's feelings would have been less desperate had she been blessed, as Prince was just then, by a full stomach.

Nevertheless, the tragedy was all very real to the child. She saw Aunty Rose sitting in one of her stiffest and most straight-backed chairs on the porch, knitting. Carolyn May would not go near her, for she knew she would burst out crying at the first kind word.

She had learned to love Aunty Rose. The old lady always waited for Carolyn May to say her prayers now, when bedtime came. And the child

had a well-grounded suspicion that before Mrs. Kennedy sought her own bed she crept into Carolyn May's room and kissed her softly and saw that she was tucked in.

She felt that she would be sorry to leave Aunty Rose. And there was the woman whose husband kept the store on the other corner from the Stagg house. *She* had given Carolyn May a stick of candy one day.

" I expect she'll be sorry not to see me again," the little girl told herself. " And there's Mrs. Gormley —and Chet. They'll think it funny I didn't bid them good-bye. And, then, there's Mr. Parlow."

After all, there seemed to be quite a number of people Carolyn May knew—" just to be acquainted with." But she had never yet seen the fulfilment of her strong desire to become acquainted with the carpenter's daughter, Miss Amanda Parlow.

All these thoughts shuttled back and forth in Carolyn May's brain. The minutes of that afternoon dragged by in most doleful procession. There was no idea in the little girl's mind that Uncle Joe might change his intention and Prince be saved from the watery grave promised him. When she saw the hardware dealer come into the yard almost an hour earlier than their usual supper time she was not surprised. Nor did she think of pleading with him for the dog's life.

The little girl watched him askance. Mr. Stagg came directly through the yard, stopping only at the

shed for a moment. There he secured a strong potato sack, and with it trailing from his hand went half-way up the knoll to where there was a heap of stones. He stooped down and began to select some of these, putting them in the bag.

This was too much for Carolyn May. With a fearful look at Uncle Joe's uncompromising shoulders, she went to the tree where Prince was chained. Exchanging the chain for the leather leash with which she always led him about, the little girl guided the mongrel across the yard and around the corner of the house.

Her last backward glance assured her that the hardware dealer had not observed her. Quickly and silently she led Prince to the front gate, and they went out together into the dusty road.

"I—I know we oughtn't to," whispered Carolyn May to her canine friend, "but I feel I've just *got* to save you, Prince. I—I can't see you drownd-ed dead like that!"

Prince whined in sympathy. Perhaps he felt, too, that life held much that was good and beautiful to his doggish soul.

Carolyn May had no idea where they should go to hide from Uncle Joe. This venture was the result of a sudden and unpremeditated determination. Her only thought at first was to get out of sight of the Stagg premises.

So she turned the nearest corner and went up the road towards the little closed, gable-roofed cottage

where Aunty Rose had lived before she had come to be Uncle Joe's housekeeper.

Carolyn May had already peered over into the small yard of the cottage and had seen that Mrs. Kennedy still kept the flower-beds weeded and the walks neat and the grass plot trimmed. But the window shutters were barred and the front door built up with boards.

Carolyn May went in through the front gate and sat down on the doorstep, while Prince dropped to a comfortable attitude beside her. The dog slept. The little girl ruminated.

She would not go back to Uncle Joe's—no, indeed! She did not know just what she would do when dark should come, but Prince should not be sacrificed to her uncle's wrath.

In the morning she would walk to the railroad station. She knew how to get there, and she knew what time the train left for the south. The conductor had been very kind to her all the way up from New York, and she was sure he would be glad to take her back again.

She and Prince! They were both happier in that small Harlem apartment, even with papa and mamma away, than they ever could be at Sunrise Cove. And, of course, Prince could not be happy after he was "drownd-ed dead!"

So it all seemed to the heart-hungry child sitting on the doorstep of the abandoned house. A voice, low, sweet, yet startling, aroused her.

"What are you doing there, little girl?"

Both runaways started, but neither of them was disturbed by the appearance of her who had accosted Carolyn May.

"Oh, Miss Mandy!" breathed the little girl, and thought that the carpenter's daughter had never looked so pretty.

"What are you doing there?" repeated Miss Parlow.

"We—we've run away," said Carolyn May at last. She could be nothing but frank; it was her nature.

"Run away!" repeated the pretty woman. "You don't mean that?"

"Yes, ma'am. I have. And Prince. From Uncle Joe and Aunty Rose," Carolyn May assured her, nodding her head with each declaration.

"Oh, my dear! What for?" asked Miss Amanda.

So Carolyn May told her—and with tears.

Meanwhile the woman came into the yard and sat beside the child on the step. With her arm about the little girl, Miss Amanda snuggled her up close, wiping the tears away with her own handkerchief.

"I just *can't* have poor Prince drownd-ed," Carolyn May sobbed. "I'd want to be drownd-ed myself, too."

"I know, dear. But do you really believe your Uncle Joseph would do such a thing? Would he drown your dog?"

"I—I saw him putting the stones in the bag," sobbed Carolyn May. "And he *said* he would."

"But he said it when he was angry, dear. We often say things when we are angry—more's the pity!—which we do not mean, and for which we are bitterly sorry afterwards. I am sure, Carolyn May, that your Uncle Joe has no intention of drowning your dog."

"Oh, Miss Amanda! Are you pos'tive?"

"Positive! I know Joseph Stagg. He was never yet cruel to any *dumb* creature. Go ask him yourself, Carolyn May. Whatever else he may be, he is not a hater of helpless and dumb animals."

"Miss Amanda," cried Carolyn May, with clasped hands, "you—you are just lifting an awful big lump off my heart! I'll run and ask him right away."

She put up her lips for Miss Amanda to kiss, but she could not wait to walk properly with her new friend to the corner. Instead, she raced with the barking Prince back to the Stagg premises. Mr. Stagg had just finished filling in with the stones the trench Prince had dug under the garden fence.

"There," he grunted. "That dratted dog won't dig this hole any bigger, I reckon. What's the matter with you, Car'lyn?"

"Are—are you going to drownd Princey, Uncle Joe? If—if you do, it just seems to me, I—*I shall die!*"

He looked up at her searchingly.

"Humph! is that mongrel so all-important to

your happiness that you want to die if he does?" demanded the man.

"Yes, Uncle Joe."

"Humph!" ejaculated the hardware dealer again. "I believe you think more of that dog than you do of me."

"Yes, Uncle Joe."

The frank answer hit Mr. Stagg harder than he would have cared to acknowledge.

"Why?" he queried.

"Because Prince never said a word to hurt me in his life!" said Carolyn May, sobbing.

The man was silenced. He felt in his inmost heart that he had been judged.

CHAPTER IX

PRINCE AWAKENS THE CORNERS

CAMP-MEETING time was over, and the church at The Corners was to open for its regular Sunday services.

"Both Satan and the parson have had a vacation," said Mr. Stagg, "and now they can tackle each other again and see which'll get the strangle hold 'twixt now and revival time."

"You should not say such things, especially before the child, Joseph Stagg," admonished Aunty Rose.

Carolyn May, however, seemed not to have heard Uncle Joe's pessimistic remark; she was too greatly excited by the prospect of Sunday-school. And the very next week-day school would begin!

By this first week in September the little girl was quite settled in her new home at The Corners. Prince was still a doubtful addition to the family, both Uncle Joe and Aunty Rose plainly having misgivings about him. But in regard to the little girl herself, the hardware merchant and the housekeeper were of one opinion, even though they did not admit it to each other.

Aunty Rose remained, apparently, as austere as ever, while Joseph Stagg was quite as much immersed in business as formerly. Yet there were times, when she and the child were alone, that Mrs. Kennedy unbent, in a greater or less degree. And on the part of Joseph Stagg, he found himself thinking of sunny-haired, blue-eyed "Hannah's Car'lyn" with increasing frequency.

"Didn't you ever have any little girls, Aunty Rose?" Carolyn May asked the housekeeper on one of these intimate occasions. "Or little boys? I mean of your very own."

"Yes," said Aunty Rose in a matter-of-fact tone. "Three. But only to have them in my arms for a very little while. Each died soon after coming to me. There was something quite wrong with them all, so the doctors said."

"Oh, my dear! All three of them?" sighed Carolyn May.

"Two girls and a boy. Only one lived to be three months old. They are all buried behind the church yonder. My husband, Frank Kennedy, was not one of us. I married out of Meeting."

The little girl knew that she meant her husband, long since dead, had not been a member of the congregation of Friends. She leaned against Mrs. Kennedy's chair and tucked what was meant to be a comforting hand into that of Aunty Rose.

"Now I know something about you," Carolyn May said softly.

"What is that?" asked the woman, her eyes smiling at the child if her lips did not.

"I know why it is you don't know just how to cuddle little girls and show 'em how much you love 'em. *All* little children, I mean—not only me."

Aunty Rose looked down at her with unchanging countenance, but Carolyn May looked fearlessly up into the woman's face. No amount of grimness there could trouble the child now. For she knew something else about Aunty Rose. The housekeeper loved her!

"Yes, you didn't have your little babies long enough to learn how to cuddle and snug 'em up. That's it. You ought to learn, Aunty Rose."

"What for?" asked Aunty Rose Kennedy rather sharply.

"Why! so you could take me up into your lap and hug and kiss me—just as my mamma used to do."

"You can't teach an old dog new tricks, I guess, Car'lyn May," said Aunty Rose. "Seems to me too much hugging spoils children."

"Oh, no, indeed!" cried the little girl confidently. "Never! My papa used to snug me up lots. Do you know what he used to call me?"

"No."

"It was just for fun, you know. Just a pet name. Snuggy. He 'most always called me that. 'Cause I liked to be snuggled up."

Aunty Rose made no rejoinder.

The next morning early Carolyn May, with Prince, went over into the churchyard and found the three little stones in a row. She knew they must be the right ones, for there was a bigger stone, with the inscription, " Frank Kennedy, beloved spouse of Rose Kennedy," upon it. " Spouse " puzzled the little girl at first, but she felt timid about asking Aunty Rose about it.

The names on the three little stones were Emeline, Frank, Jr., and Clarissa. Weeds and tall grass had begun to sprout about the tombstones in the old churchyard.

Carolyn May pulled the unsightly weeds from about the little, lozenge-shaped stones and about the taller one, and she dug out a mullen plant that grew on one of the graves.

While she was thus engaged, a tall man in black—looking rather " weedy " himself, if the truth were told—came across the graveyard and stood beside her. He wore a broad band of crêpe around his hat and on his arm, and was very grave and serious-looking.

" Who are you, little girl? " he asked, his voice being quite agreeable and his tone kindly.

" I'm Car'lyn May, if you please," she replied, looking up at him frankly.

" Car'lyn May Stagg? " he asked. " You're Mr. Stagg's little girl? I've heard of you."

" Car'lyn May Cameron," she corrected seriously. " I'm only staying with Uncle Joe. He is my

guardian, and he had to take me, of course, when my papa and mamma were lost at sea."

"Indeed?" returned the gentleman. "Do you know who I am?"

"I—I think," said Carolyn May doubtfully, "that you must be the undertaker."

For a moment the gentleman looked startled. Then he flushed a little, but his eyes twinkled.

"The undertaker?" he murmured. "Do I look like that?"

"Excuse me, sir," said Carolyn May. "I don't really know you, you know. Maybe you're *not* the undertaker."

"No, I am not. Though our undertaker, Mr. Snivvins, is a very good man."

"Yes, sir," said the little girl politely.

"I am the pastor here—your pastor, I hope," he said, putting a kind hand upon her head.

"Oh, I know you now!" said Carolyn May brightly. "You're the man Uncle Joe says is going to get a strangle hold on Satan, now that vacation is over."

The Reverend Afton Driggs looked rather odd again. The shocking frankness of the child came pretty near to flooring him.

"I—ahem! Your uncle compliments me," he said drily. "You don't know that he is ready to do his share, do you?"

"His share?" repeated the puzzled little girl.

"Towards strangling the Evil One," pursued the

minister, a wry smile curling the corners of his lips.

"Has he got a share in it, too?" asked Carolyn May.

"I think we all should have," said the minister, looking down at her with returning kindliness in his glance. "Even little girls like you."

Carolyn May looked at him quite seriously.

"Do you s'pose," she asked him confidentially, "that Satan is really wicked enough to trouble little girls?"

It was a startling bit of new philosophy thus suggested, and Mr. Driggs shook his head in grave doubt. But it gave him something to think of all that day; and the first sermon preached in The Corners church that autumn seemed rather different from most of those solid, indigestible discourses that the good man was wont to drone out to his parishioners.

"Dunno but it is worth while to give the parson a vacation," pronounced Uncle Joe at the dinner table. "Seems to me, his sermon this morning seemed to have a new snap to it. Mebbe he'll give old Satan a hard rub this winter, after all."

"Joseph Stagg!" said Aunty Rose admonishingly.

"I think he's a very nice man," said Carolyn May suddenly. "And I kep' awake most of the time—you see, I heard poor Princey howling for me here, where he was tied up."

"Hum!" ejaculated Mr. Stagg. "Which kept you awake—the dog or the minister?"

"Oh, I like Mr. Driggs very much," the little girl assured him. "And he's in great 'fliction, too, I am sure. He—he wears crêpe on his hat and sleeve."

"Hum, so he does," grunted Mr. Stagg. "He's 'most always in mourning for somebody or something. I tell him his name ought to be Jeremiah instead of 'Sweet Afton,'" which comment was, of course, lost on Carolyn May. But she said seriously:

"Do you s'pose, Uncle Joe, that he *looks up* enough? It does just seem to me as though poor Mr. Driggs must always be looking down instead of looking up to see the sunshine and the blue sky and—and the mountains, like my papa said you should."

Uncle Joe was silent. Aunty Rose said, very briskly for her:

"And your papa was right, Car'lyn May. He was a very sensible man, I have no doubt."

"Oh, he was quite a *wonderful* man," said the little girl with full assurance.

It was on the following morning that school opened. The Corners district school was a red building, with a squatty bell tower and two front doors, standing not far up the road beyond the church. Carolyn May thought it a very odd-looking schoolhouse indeed.

The school she had attended in New York was a big brick-and-stone building, with wide corridors, well-ventilated rooms, a lovely basement gymnasium, a great hall, a roof garden in summer, part of which was enclosed with glass and steam-heated in winter.

Inside the little red schoolhouse were only rows of desks and "forms"—all marred, knife-marked, and ink-stained. The initials of the very "oldest inhabitant" of The Corners, Mr. Jackson Sprague, were carved in the lid of one desk. And the system of education followed in this school seemed to be now much what it had been in Mr. Sprague's day.

Miss Minnie Lester taught the school, and although Miss Minnie looked very sharply through her glasses at one, Carolyn May thought she was going to love the teacher very much.

Indeed, that was Carolyn May's attitude towards almost everybody whom she met. She expected to love and to be loved. Was it any wonder she made so many friends?

But this country school was conducted so differently from the city school that Carolyn May found herself quite puzzled on many points.

She had to divide her desk with another little girl, Freda Payne. Freda was a black-eyed, snappy little girl who could whisper out of the corner of her mouth without the teacher's seeing her do it. She instructed Carolyn May from time to time regarding this new world the city child had entered into.

"Goodness me! didn't you ever have a slate before?" she whispered to Carolyn May.

"No," the little city girl confessed. "They don't let us use them where I went to school. They make too much noise. And, then, they aren't clean."

"Clean! Course they're clean, if you keep 'em clean," declared Freda fiercely.

She showed the stranger the bottle of water she kept in her desk and the sponge with which she washed her slate.

"But the sponge is dirty. And it smells!" ventured Carolyn May, with a slight shudder. She had heard of germs, and the mussy-looking bit of sponge was not an attractive object.

"'Tain't neither!" snapped Freda, making her denial positive with two negatives. "The boys spit on their slates and wipe 'em off on their jacket sleeves. *That's* nasty. But us girls is clean."

Carolyn May could not see it, however, and she ignored her own slate.

"You can't use that pencil to write with on paper," Freda caught her up with another admonition. "That's a slate pencil, if it has got wood around it."

"Oh, dear me! Is it?" sighed the new pupil. "And I haven't any other here, that I can see."

"Well, I'll lend you one. But don't chew the lead. I hate to have folks chew my lead pencils."

Carolyn May promised not to lunch off of the borrowed writing instrument.

But these were not all the pitfalls into which the

new pupil fell. The morning session was not half over before she wished for a drink of water. Of course, she asked her seatmate about it.

"You must raise your hand till Miss Minnie sees you. You'll have to waggle your hand good to make her look, like enough," added Carolyn May's mentor. "Then, if she nods, you go back to the entry and get your drink."

"Oh," was the comment of the city child, and she immediately raised her hand. She did not have to "waggle" it much before Miss Minnie took notice of her.

"Well, Carolyn May?" she said.

"May—may I get a drink—please?" almost whispered Carolyn May, for she felt very much embarrassed.

Miss Minnie nodded. The little girl rose and went back to the entry on the girls' side of the house. She looked all about this rather large square room without finding what she sought.

Against two walls were rows of pegs, on which were hung the coats and hats and dinner baskets, or dinner pails, of the pupils. In the corner was a shelf with a dingy bucket upon it and a rusty tin dipper hanging beside it.

Finally, Carolyn May came slowly back to her seat. Miss Minnie was busy with a class of older pupils. Freda asked—of course out of the corner of her mobile mouth:

"Did you get your drink?"

Carolyn May shook her head.

"Why not?"

"I didn't see any faucet."

"Faucet! What's that for?" demanded the other little girl.

"Why, to get the water out of. Isn't there a cold-water tank? And don't you have paper cups?" demanded Carolyn May. "I didn't see a thing like what we use in our school in New York."

"Mercy me, Carolyn May!" fairly hissed Freda. "What *are* you talking about? We don't have water laid on in the schoolhouse like they do at home. The pump's in the yard. And whoever heard of paper cups? Why, paper won't hold water!"

"Yes, they do," the other little girl said eagerly. "They are all folded, and you take one and open it, and it holds water."

"I think you're fibbing!" declared her seatmate flatly.

"Oh!" gasped the new pupil, deeply hurt by the imputation.

"Yes, I do!" said Freda. "I've got a folding nickel cup. But who ever heard of paper cups? Everybody drinks out of the dipper."

"That rusty old saucepan?" murmured Carolyn May in wonder.

"Huh, you're awful finicky!" scoffed the other.

"Is the water in that pail on the shelf?"

"Yes. And don't you spill none, or Miss Minnie will get mad at you."

"I guess I'll wait till I get home at noon recess," said the little city girl. "I'm—I'm not so thirsty now."

There proved, too, at the start, to be a little difficulty with Miss Minnie. Prince would not remain at home. He howled and whined for the first half of Monday morning's session—as Aunty Rose confessed, almost driving her mad. Then he slipped his collar and tore away on Carolyn May's cold trail.

He heard the children's voices as they came out of the school at recess, and charged into the group in search of his little mistress. Carolyn May was just getting acquainted with the other pupils of her own age and was enjoying herself very much.

"Carolyn May," pronounced Miss Minnie from the girls' door-stoop, "you must take that horrid dog home at once! Hurry, or you will be late for the next class."

Carolyn May was hurt by the teacher's tone and words, and she *knew* Prince felt bad about it. He fairly slunk out of the schoolyard by her side, and some of the pupils laughed.

She pulled his collar up a hole tighter and begged Prince to be good and remain at home till noon. Yet, ten minutes after the session had again opened there sounded a rattling on the porch floor, and into the school marched the dog, having drawn the staple with which his chain had been fastened to the bole of the tree in Mr. Stagg's back yard.

Miss Minnie was both alarmed and angry. Some

of the little girls shrieked and wept when Prince pranced over to Carolyn May's seat.

"If you do not shut that awful dog up so that he cannot follow you here, Carolyn May, I shall speak to your uncle, Mr. Stagg, about it. Ugh, the ugly beast! Take him away at once!"

This was entirely too much for the little girl's good temper. Her best friend, she felt, was maligned.

"Miss Minnie," she said breathlessly, "I don't see how you can say Prince is ugly. I think he is *beautiful!* And he is just as kind as he can be!"

She was so hurt and excited because her canine friend was so disliked that she did not even cry one tear! The teacher, remaining well out of reach of the dog, repeated her command.

"Take that dog straight home, and don't let him get in this schoolhouse again! I will not allow the other children to be so frightened."

So Carolyn May's schooldays at The Corners did not begin very happily, after all. She had always loved and been loved by every teacher she had ever had before. But Miss Minnie seemed prejudiced against her because of Prince.

The little girl felt bad about this, but she was of too cheerful a temperament to droop for long under the pressure of any trouble. The other children liked her, and Carolyn May found plenty of playmates. She would never loiter with them, however, in the schoolyard at noon or after school. Instead,

she would hurry home and release poor Prince from duress.

It had been found impossible to keep the dog on a chain. He had almost choked himself once, and again had torn his ears getting his collar off. So the strong chicken coop under the big tree in the back yard which had first been his prison was again his cell while his little mistress was at school.

"Of course," Carolyn May said to Aunty Rose, "we mustn't let poor Princey know it's because of Miss Minnie that he has to be shut up. He might take a dislike to her, just as she has to him; and that would be dreadful! If she'd only let him, I know he'd lie down right outside the schoolroom door while I was inside, and be just as good!"

But Miss Minnie remained obdurate. She did not like any dogs, and in her eyes Prince was especially objectionable.

One of the bigger girls made up a rhyme about Carolyn May and Prince, which began:

"Car'lyn May had a mongrel dog,
It's coat was not white like snow;
And everywhere that Car'lyn went
That dog was sure to go.

"It followed her to school one day,
Which made Miss Minnie sore;
But when Car'lyn tied the mongrel up,
It was bound to bark and roar."

There were many more verses; the big girl was always adding new ones.

"I don't mind it—much," Carolyn May confessed to Aunty Rose, "but I wouldn't like Prince to hear that poetry. His feelings might be hurt."

It was on the last Friday in the month that something happened which quite changed Miss Minnie's attitude towards "that mongrel." Incidentally, The Corners, as a community, was fully awakened from its lethargy, and, as it chanced, like the Sleeping Beauty and all her retinue, by a Prince.

The school session on Friday afternoons was always shortened. This day Mr. Brady, one of the school trustees, came to review the school and, before he left, to pay Miss Minnie her salary for the month.

Carolyn May had permission from Aunty Rose to go calling that afternoon. Freda Payne, whom she liked very much, lived up the road beyond the schoolhouse, and she had invited the little city girl to come to see her. Of course, Prince had to be included in the invitation. Freda fully understood that, and Carolyn May took him on his leash.

They saw Miss Minnie at her desk when they went past the schoolhouse. She was correcting written exercises. Carolyn May secretly hoped that her own was much better than she feared it was.

Not far beyond the schoolhouse Prince began to growl, and the hairs stiffened on his neck.

"Whatever is the matter with you, Prince?" demanded Carolyn May.

In a moment she saw the cause of the dog's continued agitation. A roughly dressed, bewhiskered man sat beside the road eating a lunch out of a newspaper. He leered at Carolyn May and said:

"I guess you got a bad dog there, ain't ye, little girl?"

"Oh, no! He's us'ally very polite," answered Carolyn May. "You *must* be still, Prince! You see," she explained, "he doesn't like folks to wear old clothes. If—if you had on your Sunday suit, I'm quite sure he would not growl at you."

"He wouldn't, hey?" said the man hoarsely, licking his fingers of the last crumbs of his lunch. "An' suppose a feller ain't got no Sunday suit?"

"Why, then, I s'pose Prince wouldn't *ever* let you come into our yard—if he was loose."

"Don't you let him loose now, little girl," said the fellow, getting up hurriedly, and eyeing the angry dog askance.

"Oh, no, sir. We're going visiting up the road. Come away, Prince. I won't let him touch you," she assured the man.

The latter seemed rather doubtful of her ability to hold the dog long, and he hobbled away towards the schoolhouse. Prince really objected to leaving the vicinity, and Carolyn May scolded him all the way up the road to Freda's house.

Carolyn May had a very pleasant call—Freda's

mother even approved of Prince—and it was an hour before the two started for home. In sight of the schoolhouse Prince gave evidence again of excitement.

"I wonder what is the matter with you now," Carolyn May began, when suddenly she sighted what had evidently so disturbed the dog.

A man was crouching under one of the schoolhouse windows, bobbing up now and then to peer in. It was the man whom they had previously seen beside the road.

"Hush, Prince!" whispered little Carolyn May, holding the dog by the collar.

She, too, could see through the open window. Miss Minnie was still at her desk. She had finished correcting the pupils' papers. Now she had her bag open and was counting the money Mr. Brady had given her.

"O-o-oh!" breathed Carolyn May, clinging to the eager dog's collar.

The man at the window suddenly left his position and slipped around to the door. In a moment he appeared in the schoolroom before the startled teacher.

Miss Minnie screamed. The man, with a rough threat, darted forward to seize her purse.

Just then Carolyn May unsnapped the leash from Prince's collar and let him go.

"Save Miss Minnie, Princey!" she cried after the charging dog.

Prince did not trouble about the door. The open window, through which the tramp had spied upon the schoolmistress, was nearer. He went up the wall and scrambled over the sill with a savage determination that left no doubt whatever in the tramp's mind.

With a yell of terror, the fellow bounded out of the door and tore along the road and through The Corners at a speed never before equalled in that locality by a Knight of the Road.

Prince lost a little time in recovering his footing and again getting on the trail of the fleeing tramp. But he was soon baying the fellow past the blacksmith shop and the store.

The incident called the entire population of The Corners, save the bedridden, to the windows and doors. For once the little, somnolent village awoke, and, as before pointed out, a Prince awoke it.

Hiram Lardner, the blacksmith, declared afterwards that " you could have played checkers on that tramp's coat tails, providin' you could have kep' up with him."

When Prince came back from the chase, however, the tramp's coat tails would never serve as a checkerboard, for the dog bore one of them in his foam-flecked jaws as a souvenir.

CHAPTER X

A SUNDAY WALK

REALLY, if Prince had been a vain dog, his ego would certainly have become unduly developed because of this incident. The Corners, as a community, voted him an acquisition, whereas heretofore he had been looked upon as a good deal of a nuisance.

After she recovered from her fright, Miss Minnie walked home with Carolyn May and allowed Prince's delighted little mistress to encourage the "hero" to "shake hands with teacher."

"Now, you see, he's acquainted with you, Miss Minnie," said Carolyn May. "He's an awful nice dog. You didn't know just how nice he was before. But I *am* glad he didn't really bite that dirty-looking old tramp, Miss Minnie. I expect it would have made Prince sick. And I'm going to take that piece of his old coat and bury it in the garden."

Even Mr. Stagg had a good word at last to say for Prince; for he had been coming home to supper at the moment the dog chased the thievish tramp through the village.

"We have too many of that gentry here because

of the railroad. I wish he'd chase 'em all out of town," declared the hardware dealer.

Besides, he profited by the incident. The very next day Miss Minnie came into his store and bought one of the very nicest dog collars he had in stock—a green leather one with brass rivet heads studding it and a shiny nameplate.

The silversmith, Mr. Murchiston, took almost a week to engrave on it:

Prince
For a Brave Deed

The next Friday noon Miss Minnie told Carolyn May she could bring Prince to school with her—of course, on his leash. By this time all the other pupils had learned that, even if he did look savage, Prince was quite as gentle and friendly as little Carolyn May herself, and they had ceased to be afraid of him.

The afternoon session closed at the usual recess time, and then it was that Miss Minnie presented the new collar to Prince, with, as Mr. Brady, the trustee, would have said, "a few appropriate words."

The big girl invented another verse in imitation of "Mary's Little Lamb," and recited it:

"'What makes Prince love Car'lyn so?'
The little children cry.
'Why, Car'lyn loves the dog, you know,'
The teacher doth reply."

"Oh, dear me!" sighed Carolyn May happily. "It's just like a party—a birthday party. We never celebrated Prince's birthday before, or gave him any kind of party. But I *know* he enjoys it."

He certainly did seem to appreciate the honour, and bore himself proudly with the new green collar around his neck. Uncle Joe attached his S.P.C.A. license tag to it, which jingled like a bangle.

Carolyn May was glad to see Uncle Joe do this. Everything that Uncle Joe did which showed he thought of something besides his business pleased his little niece.

"You see," she told Aunty Rose, "I know Uncle Joe doesn't *look up* enough. Whenever I'm in his store I almost always see him at his desk working at that great big book in which he keeps his accounts.

"Chet Gormley says he always is at it—Sundays, too. You know, Aunty Rose, he walks down to the store every Sunday after dinner and stays till supper time."

"I know it, child," the housekeeper agreed. "Joseph Stagg is completely wrapped up in his business."

"Yes. My papa had to work hard, and awful long hours, too. But when he was away from the newspaper office he said he always left business behind him. He looked up at the sky and listened to the birds sing. Leastways," said Carolyn May hon-

estly, " he listened to the sparrows quarrel. There weren't many other birds on our block, 'cept a parrot; and he scolded awfully."

At any rate, she was quite sure that Uncle Joe ought to be interested in something besides his hardware store. She thought about this a good deal. And, finally, she laid an innocent little trap for him.

Of one tenet of the Friends' belief Aunty Rose was thoroughly convinced: no cooking went on in the Stagg kitchen after breakfast on the Sabbath. Of course, they had dinner, but save for hot tea or coffee or soup the viands at that meal and at supper were cold.

Sometimes during the warm weather there were heaps of Aunty Rose's flaky-crusted apple turnovers, baked the day before, to crumble into bowls of creamy milk, or there were piles of lovely sandwiches and eggs with mayonnaise, and suchlike delicacies.

Aunty Rose, however, removed her work apron when the breakfast dishes were washed and put away and the kitchen " ridded up," and for the remainder of Sunday she did only the very necessary things about the house.

If she did not walk to town to attend the Friends' Meeting House, she sat in a straight-backed chair and read books that—to Carolyn May—looked " awfully religious." However, she did not make the day of rest a nightmare to the child. The little girl had her picture books, as well as her Sunday-

school papers, and she could stroll about or play quietly with Prince.

The Corners was not burdened with the arrival of Sunday papers from the city, with their blotchy-looking supplements and unsightly so-called "funny sheets." Almost everybody went to church, and all the children to Sunday-school, which was held first.

The Reverend Afton Driggs, though serious-minded, was a loving man. He was fond of children, and he and his childless wife gave much of their attention to the Sunday-school. Mrs. Driggs taught Carolyn May's class of little girls. Mrs. Driggs did her very best, too, to get the children to stay to the preaching service, but Carolyn May had to confess that the pastor's discourses were usually hard to understand.

"And he is always reading about the 'Begats,'" she complained gently to Uncle Joe as they went home together on this particular Sunday—the one following the presentation of Prince's new collar—"and I *can't* keep interested when he does that. I s'pose the 'Begats' were very nice people, but I'm sure they weren't related to us—they've all got such funny names."

"Hum!" ejaculated Uncle Joe, smothering a desire to laugh. "Flow gently, sweet Afton, does select his passages of Scripture mostly from the 'valleys of dry bones,' I allow. You've got it about right there, Carolyn May."

"Uncle Joe," said the little girl, taking her cour-

age in both hands, "will you do something for me?" Then, as he stared down at her from under his bushy brows, she added: "I don't mean that you aren't *always* doing something for me—letting me sleep here at your house, and eat with you, and all *that*. But something special."

"What is the 'something special'?" asked Mr. Stagg cautiously.

"Something I want you to do to-day. You always go off to your store after dinner, and when you come home it's too dark."

"Too dark for what?"

"For us to take a walk," said the little girl very earnestly. "Oh, Uncle Joe, you don't know how *dreadful* I miss taking Sunday walks with my papa! Of course, we took 'em in the morning, for he had to go to work on the paper in the afternoon, but we did just about go *every*where.

"Sometimes," pursued Carolyn May in reminiscence, "we went to a very, very early morning service in a church. It was held pertic'lar for folks that worked at night. It wasn't like our church where I went to Sunday-school, for there were boys in long dresses, and they swung little dishes on chains, with something burning in 'em that smelled nice, and the minister did all the talking——"

"Humph!" snorted Mr. Stagg, who was just as startled as was the Reverend Mr. Driggs by any new idea.

"And then we walked," sighed Carolyn May.

"Of course, we had often to take a ride first before we could get a place to walk in—not on pavement. On real dirt and grass! Under the trees! Where the birds sang! And the flowers lived! Oh, Uncle Joe! do you know how pretty the woods are now? The trees and bushes are all such lovely colours. I don't dare go very far alone—not even with Prince. I might get lost, Aunty Rose says.

"But if you would go with me," the little girl added wistfully, "just this afternoon, seems to me I wouldn't feel so—so *empty*."

That "empty" feeling from which the little girl suffered when she thought of her parents and her old life she did not often speak of. Mr. Stagg looked down at her earnest face and saw that the blue eyes were misty. But Carolyn May was brave.

"Humph!" said Uncle Joe, clearing his throat. "If it's going to do you any particular good, Car'lyn May, I suppose I can take a walk with you. I expect the chestnuts are ripe."

"Oh, they *are*, Uncle Joe! And I've wanted to get just a few. But whenever Princey and I go to any of the trees near by, there are always squirrels—and they do quarrel so! I s'pose that's all they'll have to eat this winter, and maybe the winter is going to be a hard one. That's what Tim, the hackman, says. I don't want to rob the poor little squirrels. But couldn't we give 'em something instead to eat, and so take a few of their nuts?"

"The squirrels always were piggish," chuckled

Uncle Joe. "I don't believe they are entitled to more'n a bushel apiece. Anyway, we'll take a basket with us."

This they did. Although Aunty Rose was very strict with herself on Sunday, she did not disapprove of this walk. And certainly Prince did not.

Once off his chain and realising that they were bound for the woods, he acted like a mad dog for the first few minutes. As they crossed the already browning fields he dashed back and forth, now far ahead, now charging back at them as though determined to run them down. Then he rolled on the grass, crept on his stomach, tearing up the sod with his strong claws, and barking with delight.

"That fool pup hasn't got the sense he was born with," declared Uncle Joe, but without rancour.

"He's just happy," explained Carolyn May. "You see, he's happy for himself and happy for us, too. So he just has to show off this way. It isn't really that he hasn't good sense, Uncle Joe."

It was a crisp day—one of those autumn days when the tang of frost remains in the air, in spite of all the efforts of the sun to warm it. The sumac had blushed redly all along the hedgerows. The young oak leaves were brown and curled. Under foot, the dead leaves rustled and whispered. The bare-limbed beeches looked naked, indeed, among the other trees. Even the yellowing leaves of the chestnuts themselves were rattling down without a breath of wind stirring.

The jays screamed at the party as they wheeled swiftly through the wood. Once Prince jumped a rabbit from its form, and Uncle Joe actually urged the excited dog in his useless chase of the frightened creature. But Carolyn May could not approve of that.

"You see," she said gravely, "although it's lots of fun for Prince, we don't know just how the rabbit feels about it. Maybe he doesn't want to run so hard. There! Prince has given it up. I'm glad."

She did not mind the dog's chasing and barking at the squirrels. They were well out of reach. One excited squirrel leaped from a tree top into the thick branches of another tree, sailing through the air "just like an aeroplane." Carolyn May had seen aeroplanes and thought she would like to go up in one.

"Of course," she explained, "not without somebody who knew all about coming down again. I wouldn't want to get stuck up there."

Here and there they stopped to pick up the glossy brown chestnuts that had burst from their burrs. That is, Carolyn May and her uncle did. Prince, after a single attempt to nose one of the prickly burrs, left them strictly alone.

"You might just as well try to eat Aunty Rose's strawberry needle cushion, Princey," the little girl said wisely. "You'll have a sorer nose than Amos Bartlett had when he tried to file it down with a wood rasp."

"Hum!" ejaculated Mr. Stagg, "whatever possessed that Bartlett child to do such a fool trick?"

"Why, you know his nose *is* awfully big," said Carolyn May. "And his mother's always worried about it. She must have worried Amos, too, for one day last week he went over to Mr. Parlow's shop, borrowed a wood rasp, and tried to file his nose down to a proper size. And *now* he has to go with his nose all greased and shiny till the new skin grows back on it."

"Bless me, what these kids will do!" muttered Mr. Stagg.

"Now, *I've* got big feet," sighed Carolyn May. "I know I have. But I hope I'll grow up to them. I wouldn't want to try to pare them off to make them smaller. If they have got such a long start ahead of the rest of me, I really believe that the rest of me will catch up to my feet in time, don't you?"

"Nothing like being hopeful," commented Mr. Stagg drily.

It was just at that moment that the little girl and the man, becoming really good comrades on this walk, met with an adventure. At least, to Carolyn May it was a real adventure, and one she was not to forget for a long, long time.

Prince suddenly bounded away, barking, down a pleasant glade, through the bottom of which flowed a brook. Carolyn May caught a glimpse of something brown moving down there, and she called shrilly to the dog to come back.

"But that's *some*body, Uncle Joe," Carolyn May said with assurance, as the dog slowly returned. "Prince never barks like that, unless it's a person. And I saw something move."

"Somebody taking a walk, like us. Couldn't be a deer," said Mr. Stagg.

"Oh," cried Carolyn May a moment later, "I see it again. That's a skirt I see. Why, it's a lady!"

Mr. Stagg suddenly grew very stern-looking, as well as silent. All the beauty of the day and of the glade they had entered seemed lost on him. He went on stubbornly, yet as though loath to proceed.

"Why," murmured Carolyn May, "it's Miss Amanda Parlow! That's just who it is!"

The carpenter's daughter was sitting on a bare brown log by the brook. She was dressed very prettily, all in brown. Carolyn May had seen her that day in church in this same pretty dress.

For some weeks Miss Amanda had been away "on a case." Carolyn May knew that she was a trained nurse and was often away from home weeks at a time. Mr. Parlow had told her about it.

The little girl wanted to speak to the pretty Miss Amanda, but she looked again into Uncle Joe's countenance and did not dare.

CHAPTER XI

A CANINE INTERVENTION

CAROLYN MAY wanted *awfully* to speak to Miss Amanda. The brown lady with the pretty roses in her cheeks sat on the log by the brook, her face turned from the path Joseph Stagg and his little niece were coming along. She must have known they were coming down the glade and who they were, for nobody could mistake the identity of Prince, and the dog would not be out in the woods with anybody but his little mistress.

Miss Parlow, however, kept her face steadily turned in the opposite direction. And Uncle Joe was quite as stubborn. He stared straight ahead down the path without letting the figure on the log get into the focus of his vision.

Carolyn May did not see how it was possible for two people who loved each other, or who ever had loved each other, to act so. They must have thought a great deal of each other once upon a time, for Chet Gormley's mother had said so. The very fact that they now acted as they did proved to the observant child that the situation was not normal.

She wanted to seize Uncle Joe's hand and whisper to him how pretty Miss Amanda looked. She wanted

to run to the lady and talk to her. Thus far she had found little opportunity for knowing Miss Amanda Parlow well, although Carolyn May and the old carpenter were now very good friends.

Hanging to Uncle Joe's hand, but looking longingly at the silent figure on the log, Carolyn May was going down to the stepping-stones by which they were to cross the brook, when, suddenly, Prince came to a halt right at the upper end of the log and his body stiffened.

"What is it, Prince?" whispered his little mistress. "Come here."

But the dog did not move. He even growled—not at Miss Amanda, of course, but at something on the log. And it was just then that Carolyn May wanted to scream—and she could not!

For there on the log, raising its flat, wicked head out of an aperture, its lidless eyes glittering, and its forked tongue shooting in and out of its jaws, was a snake, a horrid, silent, writhing creature, the look of which held the little girl horror-stricken and speechless.

Uncle Joe glanced down impatiently, to see what made her hold back so. The child's feet seemed glued to the earth. She could not take another step.

Writhing out of the hole in the log and coiling, as it did so, into an attitude to strike, the snake looked to be dangerous, indeed. The fact that it was only a large blacksnake and non-poisonous made

no difference at that moment to the dog or to the little girl—nor to Joseph Stagg when he saw it.

It was coiled right at Miss Amanda's back. She did not see it, for she was quite as intent upon keeping her face turned from Mr. Stagg as he had been determined to ignore her presence.

After all, it is the appearance of a snake that terrifies some people. They do not stop to question whether it is furnished with a poison sac or not. The very look of the creature freezes their blood.

Carolyn May was shaking and helpless. Not so Prince. He repeated his challenging growl and then sprang at the vibrating head. Miss Amanda uttered a stifled scream and jumped up from the log, whirling to see what was happening behind her.

Joseph Stagg dropped Carolyn May's hand and leaped forward with his walking-stick raised to strike. But the mongrel dog was there first. He wisely caught the blacksnake behind the head, his strong, sharp teeth severing its vertebræ.

"Good dog!" shouted Mr. Stagg excitedly. "Fine dog!"

"Oh, Miss Amanda!" shrieked Carolyn May. "I—I thought he was going to sting you—I did!"

She ran to the startled woman and clung to her hand. Prince nosed the dead snake. Mr. Stagg looked exceedingly foolish. Miss Amanda recovered her colour and her voice simultaneously.

"What a brave dog yours is, little girl," she said to Carolyn May. "And I do so despise snakes!"

Then she looked directly at Mr. Stagg and bowed gravely. "I thank you," she said, but so coldly, so Carolyn May thought, that her voice might have come "just off an iceberg."

"Oh, I didn't do anything—really I didn't," stammered the man. "It was the dog."

"Oh!" said Miss Amanda.

"Yes," repeated Mr. Stagg, "it was the dog."

Both looked very uncomfortable. Joseph Stagg began to pick up the scattered chestnuts from the overturned basket. The lady stooped and whispered to Carolyn May:

"Come to see me, my dear. I want to know you better."

"And Prince?" asked the little girl.

"And Prince, of course."

Then she kissed Carolyn May and slipped quietly away from the brook, disappearing very quickly in the undergrowth. Uncle Joe stood up, with the basket in his hand.

"You'd better call the dog away from that snake, Car'lyn May," he said in a strangely husky voice. "We'll be going."

The little girl approved.

"You surely don't want to eat it, Prince," she told her canine friend. "Snakes aren't meat, nor even fish. Are they, Uncle Joe?"

"Humph! what d'you s'pose they are, then?" he demanded.

"Why, they're—they're just insects, aren't they?

Not even dogs should eat them," and she urged Prince away from the snake.

The muscles of the "insect" still twitched, and its tail snapped about. Prince had his doubts as to whether it was really dead or was "playing possum."

"Is it true, Uncle Joe," Carolyn May asked, "that snakes can't really die till the sun goes down? You see, it still wiggles. Do—do you s'pose it's suffering?"

"I guess Prince fixed Mr. Snake, all right, at the first bite," returned Mr. Stagg. "He's dead. That old idea about the critters holding the spark of life till after sunset is just a superstition. We can safely call that fellow dead and leave him."

Joseph Stagg and the little girl went on across the stepping-stones, while Prince splashed through the water. Carolyn May was thinking about Miss Amanda Parlow, and she believed her Uncle Joe was, too.

"Uncle Joe," she said, "would that bad old snake have stung Miss Amanda?"

"Huh? No; I reckon not," admitted Mr. Stagg absent-mindedly. "Blacksnakes don't bite. A big one like that can squeeze some."

"But you were scared of it—like me and Prince. And for Miss Amanda," said Carolyn May, very much in earnest.

"I guess 'most everybody is scared by the sight of a snake, Car'lyn May."

"But you were scared for Miss Amanda's sake—

just the same as I was," repeated the little girl decidedly.

"Well?" he growled, looking away, troubled by her insistence.

"Then you don't hate her, do you?" the child pursued. "I'm glad of that, Uncle Joe, for I like her very much. I think she's a beautiful lady."

To this Uncle Joe said nothing. He was not to be drawn, badger-like, to the mouth of his den. What he really thought of Miss Amanda he kept to himself.

"Anyway," sighed Carolyn May at last, "she invited me to come to see her, now she's home from nursing. And, if you haven't got any objection, Uncle Joe, I'm going to see her."

"Go ahead," said Mr. Stagg. "I haven't anything to say against it."

But Carolyn May was far from satisfied by this permission. Child as she was, somehow she had gained an appreciation of the tragedy in the lives of Joseph Stagg and Amanda Parlow.

That cry the man had uttered when he sprang to Miss Parlow's aid had been wrenched from the very depths of his being. Nor had Miss Amanda's emotion been stirred only by the sight of a snake that was already dead when she had first seen it. Carolyn May had felt the woman's hand tremble; there had been tears flooding her eyes when she kissed the little girl.

"I guess," thought Carolyn May wisely, "that

when two folks love each other and get angry, the love's there just the same. Getting mad doesn't kill it; it only makes 'em feel worse.

"Poor Uncle Joe! Poor Miss Amanda! Maybe if they'd just try to *look up* and look for brighter things, they'd get over being mad and be happy again."

She felt that she would really like to advise with somebody on this point. Aunty Rose, of course, was out of the question. She knew that people often advised with their minister when they were in trouble, but to Carolyn May Mr. Driggs did not seem to be just the person with whom to discuss a love-affair. Kindly as the minister was disposed, he lacked the magnetism and sympathy that would urge one to take him into one's confidence in such a delicate matter.

The little girl quite realised that it was delicate. She longed to help her uncle and Miss Amanda and to bring them together, but she felt, too, that whatever she did or said might do more harm than good.

When Uncle Joe and Carolyn May returned from this adventurous walk, Mr. Stagg went heavily into his own room, closed the door, and even locked it. He went over to the old-fashioned walnut bureau that stood against the wall between the two windows, and stood before it for some moments in an attitude of deep reflection. Finally, he drew his bunch of keys from his pocket and opened one of the two

small drawers in the heavy piece of furniture—the only locked drawer there was.

It contained a miscellaneous collection of odds and ends—old school exercises, letters from his sister Hannah, an old-fashioned locket containing locks of his mother's and of his father's hair, broken trinkets, childish keepsakes. Indeed, such sentimental remembrances as Joseph Stagg possessed were secreted in this drawer.

From beneath all this litter he drew forth a tintype picture, faded now, but clear enough to show him the features of the two individuals printed on the sensitised plate.

He remembered as keenly as though it were yesterday when and how the picture had been made—at the county fair so many years ago. His own eyes looked out of the photograph proudly. They were much younger eyes than they were now.

And the girl beside him in the picture! Sweet as a wild rose, Mandy Parlow's lovely, calm countenance promised all the beauty and dignity her matured womanhood had achieved.

"Mandy! Mandy!" he murmured over and over again. "Oh, Mandy! Why? Why?"

He held the tintype for a long, long time in his hand, gazing on it with eyes that saw the vanished years rather than the portraits themselves. Finally, he hid the picture away again, closed and locked the drawer with a sigh, and with slow steps left the room.

CHAPTER XII

CHET GORMLEY TELLS SOME NEWS

IT was when she came in sight of the Parlow place on Monday afternoon, she and Prince, that Carolyn May bethought her of the very best person in the world with whom to advise upon the momentous question which so troubled her.

Who could be more interested in the happiness of Miss Amanda than Mr. Parlow himself? If his daughter had loved Uncle Joe and still loved him, it seemed to Carolyn May as though the carpenter should be very eager, indeed, to help overcome the difficulty that lay between the two parted lovers.

The little girl had been going to call on Miss Amanda. Aunty Rose had said she might, and Miss Amanda had invited her "specially."

But the thought of taking the old carpenter into her confidence and advising with him delayed that visit. Mr. Parlow was busy on some piece of cabinet work, but he nodded briskly to the little girl when she came to the door of the shop and looked in.

"Are you very busy, Mr. Parlow?" she asked him after a watchful minute or two.

"My hands be, Car'lyn May," said the carpenter in his dry voice.

"Oh!"

"But I kin listen to ye—and I kin talk."

"Oh, that's nice! You can talk when you are sawing and fitting things, can't you? Not like when you are nailing. Then your mouth's full of nails—like Mrs. Gormley's is full of pins when she's fitting you."

"Miz Gormley never fitted me to nothin' yet," returned Mr. Parlow grimly, "less 'twas a suit of gossip."

Carolyn May did not notice this remark, nor would she have understood it. She thought Chet Gormley's mother a very interesting woman, indeed. She always knew so much about everybody.

Just now, moreover, Carolyn May had something else in her mind; so she ignored Mr. Parlow's remark about the seamstress. She asked in a half-whisper:

"Mr. Parlow, did you hear about what happened yesterday?"

"Eh?" he queried, eyeing her quizzically. "Does anything ever happen on Sunday?"

"Something did on this Sunday," cried the little girl. "Didn't you hear about the snake?"

"What d'ye mean—snake? The old original snake—that sarpint ye read about in the Scriptures?" demanded the carpenter, ruffling up his grey hair till it looked like the topknot of a very cross cockatoo.

"Oh, no, Mr. Parlow!" and then little Carolyn

May explained. She told the story with such earnestness that he stopped working to listen, watching her with as shrewd, sharp eyes as ever a real cockatoo possessed.

"Humph!" was his grunted comment at the end. "Well!"

"Don't you think that was real exciting?" asked Carolyn May. "And just see how it *almost* brought my Uncle Joe and your Miss Amanda together. Don't you see?"

Mr. Parlow actually jumped. "What's that you say, child?" he rasped out grimly. "Bring Mandy and Joe Stagg together? Well, I guess not!"

"Oh, Mr. Parlow, don't you think that would be just be-a-*you*-ti-ful?" cried the little girl with a lingering emphasis upon the most important word. "Don't you see how happy they would be?"

"I'd like to know who told you they'd be happy?" he demanded crossly.

"Why! wouldn't they be? If they truly love each other and could get over being mad?"

"Humph!" growled Mr. Parlow, "you let their 'mad' alone. 'Tain't none of your business." Mr. Parlow was really all ruffled up, just as though he were angry at Carolyn May's suggestion. "I don't know as anybody's pertic'lar anxious to see that daughter of mine and Joe Stagg friendly again. No good would come of it."

Carolyn May looked at him sorrowfully. Mr. Parlow had quite disappointed her. It was plain to

be seen that he was not the right one to advise with about the matter. The little girl sighed.

"I really did s'pose you'd want to see Miss Amanda happy, Mr. Parlow," she whispered.

"Happy? Bah!" snarled the old man, setting vigorously to work again. He acted as if he wished to say no more, and let the little girl depart without another word.

Carolyn May really could not understand it—at least, she could not immediately. It seemed the most natural thing in the world for Mr. Parlow to wish to see his daughter happy and content.

And the little girl knew that Miss Amanda was not happy. As she became better and better acquainted with the woman whom she thought so beautiful she was more and more convinced that the carpenter's daughter was not of a cheerful spirit.

Mr. Jedidiah Parlow did not seem to care in the least. That must be, Carolyn May told herself, because he was under the influence of the Dark Spirit himself. He was always looking down. Like Mr. Stagg, the old carpenter was immersed in his daily tasks and seldom thought of anything else.

"Why, he doesn't even know what it means to be happy!" thought Carolyn May. "He never looks *up,* or *out,* or *away* from his carpenter's bench. Dear me! of course he isn't interested in Uncle Joe and Miss Amanda's being in love."

That Mr. Parlow might have a selfish reason for desiring to keep his daughter and Joseph Stagg apart

did not enter the little girl's mind. She was too young to appreciate such a situation as that might suggest.

After that Sunday walk, however, Carolyn May was never so much afraid of her uncle as before. Why, he had even called Prince "good dog"! Truly, Mr. Joseph Stagg was being transformed—if slowly.

He could not deny to himself that, to a certain extent, he was enjoying the presence of his little niece at The Corners. If he only could decide just what to do with the personal property of his sister Hannah and her husband down in the New York apartment. Never in his life had he been so long deciding a question. He could not bring himself to the point of writing the lawyer either to sublet the furnished apartment or to sell the furniture in it. Nor could he decide to go down himself to sort over Hannah's little treasures, put the remainder in an auction room, and close up the apartment.

He had really loved Hannah. He knew it now, did Joseph Stagg, every time he looked at the lovely little child who had come to live with him at The Corners. Why! just so had Hannah looked when she was a little thing. The same deep, violet eyes, and sunny hair, and laughing lips——

Mr. Stagg sometimes actually found a reflection of the cheerful figure of "Hannah's Car'lyn" coming between him and the big ledger over which he spent so many of his waking hours.

Once he looked up from the ledger—it was on a Saturday morning—and really did see the bright figure of the little girl standing before him. It was no dream or fancy, for old Jimmy, the cat, suddenly shot to the topmost shelf, squalling with wild abandon. Prince was nosing along at Carolyn May's side.

"Bless me!" croaked Mr. Stagg. "That dog of yours, Car'lyn May, will give Jimmy a conniption fit yet. What d'you want down here?"

Carolyn May told him. A man had come to the house to buy a cow, and Aunty Rose had sent the little girl down to tell Mr. Stagg to come home and "drive his own bargain."

"Well, well," said Mr. Stagg, locking the ledger in the safe, "I'll hustle right out and tend to it. Don't see why the man couldn't have waited till noontime. Hey, you, Chet!"

Chet Gormley was not down in the cellar on this occasion. He appeared, wearing a much soiled apron, and with very black hands, having been sorting bolts.

"Here I am, Mr. Stagg," said the boy cheerfully. "Mornin', Car'lyn May. And how's our friend?" and he ventured to pat Prince's head, having become well acquainted with the dog by this time.

"Never mind that dog, Chet," said Mr. Stagg. "You pay attention to me. Look out for the store. Don't have any fooling. And——"

"Oh, uncle! may I stay, too? Me and Prince?" cried Carolyn May. "We'll be good."

"Pshaw! Yes, if you want to," responded Mr. Stagg, hurrying away. He did not wish to be bothered with her just then. He desired to walk rapidly.

Chet went to wash his hands and remove the apron. If he was to act as clerk instead of chore boy, he certainly must "dress the part." Besides, he did not want to be so dirty in Carolyn May's presence. It seemed to Chet Gormley as though a boy must look his very best to be worthy of companionship with the radiant little vision that Mr. Stagg referred to as "Hannah's Car'lyn."

"My! your uncle's changin' more and more, ain't he?" remarked Chet, the optimistic. "He does sometimes almost laugh, Car'lyn. I never see the beat of it!"

"Oh, is he?" cried the little child. "Is he *looking up* more? Do you think he is, Chet?"

"I positively do," Chet assured her.

"And he hasn't always got his nose in that old ledger?"

"Well—I wouldn't say that he neglected business, no, ma'am," said the boy honestly. "You see, we men have got to think of business mostly. But he sure is thinkin' of some other things, too—ya-as, indeedy!"

"What things, Chet?" Carolyn May asked anxiously, hoping that Uncle Joe had shown some

recovered interest in Miss Amanda and that Chet had noticed it.

"Why—well— Now, you see, there's that house you used to live in. You know about that?"

"What about it, Chet?" the little girl asked rather timidly. "Do you mean where I lived with my mamma and papa before they—they went away?"

"Yes. That's the place."

"It was an apartment," explained Carolyn May.

"Yep. Well, Mr. Stagg ain't never done nothin' about it. He ain't sold it, nor sold the furniture, nor nothin'. You know, Car'lyn May, your folks didn't leave you no money."

"Oh! Didn't they?" cried Carolyn May, greatly startled.

"No. You see, I heard all about it. Mr. Vickers, the lawyer, came in here one day, and your uncle read a letter to him out loud. I couldn't help but hear. The letter was from another lawyer and 'twas all about you and your concerns. I heard it all," said the quite innocent Chet. He had never been taught that it was wrong to listen to other people's private matters and to repeat them.

Carolyn May's lips expressed a round "O" of wonder and surprise. Like his mother, Chet Gormley did not have to be urged when he was telling a bit of news. He was too deeply interested in it himself.

"And Mr. Vickers says: 'So the child hasn't

anything of her own, Joe?' " Chet went on. " And your uncle says: 'Not a dollar, 'cept what I might sell that furniture for.' And he hasn't sold it yet, I know. He just can't make up his mind to do it, it seems.

" My maw says Mr. Stagg always was that way—that he hates to let go of anything he once gets in his hands. But it ain't that, I tell her," declared Chet. " It's just that he can't make up his mind to sell them things that was your mother's, Car'lyn May," added the boy, with a deeper insight into Mr. Stagg's character than one might have given him credit for possessing.

But Carolyn May had heard some news that impressed her more deeply than this idiosyncrasy of Joseph Stagg's. It made her suddenly quiet, and she was glad a customer came into the store just then to draw Chet Gormley's attention.

The child had never thought before about how the good things of life came to her—her food, clothes, and lodging. She had never heard much talk of ways and means at home between her father and mother. When she had come to her uncle, if she had thought about it at all, she had supposed her parents had left ample means for her support, even if Uncle Joe did " take her home and look out for her," as she had suggested to him at their first interview.

But, now, Chet Gormley's chattering had given her a new view of the facts of the case. There had

been no money left to spend for her needs. Uncle Joe was just keeping her out of charity!

"And Prince, too," thought the little girl, with a lump in her throat. "*He* hasn't got any more home than a rabbit! And Uncle Joe don't really like dogs—not even now.

"Oh, dear me!" pursued Carolyn May. "It's awful hard to be an orphan. But to be a *poor* orphan—just a charity one—is a whole lot worse, I guess.

"Of course, uncles aren't like little girls' *real* parents. Papas and mammas are glad, I guess, to pay for clothes and food and schoolbooks, and *every*thing. But if a little girl is only a charity orphan, there aren't really any folks that want to support her. I wonder if I ought to stay with Uncle Joe and Aunty Rose and make them so much trouble?"

The thought bit deep into the little girl's very impressionable mind. The idle chatter of the not very wise, if harmless, Chet Gormley was destined to cause Carolyn May much perturbation of spirit.

She did not remain at the store until her uncle returned. Chet urged her to stay and go home with him for dinner when Mr. Stagg came back, but the little girl did not feel that she could do this. She wished to be alone and to think over this really tragic thing that faced her—the ugly fact that she was a "charity child."

"And you're a charity dog, Prince Cameron,"

she said aloud, looking down at the mongrel who walked sedately beside her along the country road. "I don't expect you ever thought of it. You never did have any money, and you don't really know who your parents are. You began being a charity dog so early that it hasn't never mattered to you at all—that's how I s'pose it must be.

"And, then, you were always loved. Papa loved you, and so did mamma; and, of course, I always loved you to death, Princey!" she cried, putting both arms suddenly around the dog's neck.

"I—I guess that's where it must be," pursued Carolyn May. "If persons are only loved, it doesn't matter if they are charity. The love takes all the sting out of being poor, I guess. But I don't know if Uncle Joe just does love me or not."

The little girl had loitered along the road until it was now dinner time. Indeed, Aunty Rose would have had the meal on the table twenty minutes earlier. Mr. Stagg had evidently remained at The Corners to sell the cow and eat dinner, too—thus "killing two birds with one stone."

And here Carolyn May and Prince were at Mr. Parlow's carpenter shop, just as the old man was taking off his apron preparatory to going in to his dinner. When Miss Amanda was away nursing, the carpenter ate at a neighbour's table.

Now, Miss Amanda appeared on the side porch.

"Where are you going, little girl?" she asked, smiling.

"Home to Aunty Rose," said Carolyn May bravely. "But I guess I'm late for dinner."

"I didn't know but something had happened," said Mr. Parlow, going, heavy-footed, up the porch steps, "when I seen Joe Stagg hikin' by more'n two hour ago."

Carolyn May told about the man wanting to buy the cow. Mr. Parlow sputtered something from the depths of the wash-basin about the buyer "payin' two prices for the critter, if he bought her of Joe Stagg," but his daughter hastened to cover this by saying:

"Don't you want to come in and eat with us, Carolyn May? Your own dinner will be cold."

"Oh, may I?" cried the little girl. Somehow, she did not feel that she could face Uncle Joe just now with this new thought that Chet Gormley's words had put into her heart. Then she hesitated, with her hand on the gate latch.

"Will there be some scraps for Prince?" she asked. "Or bones?"

"I believe I can find something for Prince," Miss Amanda replied. "I owe him more than one good dinner, I guess, for killing that snake. Come in, and we will see."

The little girl at once became more cheerful. She washed her hands and face at the pump bench, as had Mr. Parlow. She found his big spectacles for him (Miss Amanda declared he always managed to lose them when he took them off); and Carolyn May

wiped the lenses, too, before the carpenter set them on his nose again.

"There! I believe I kin see good for the first time to-day," he declared. "I reckon I could have seen my work better all the forenoon if I'd had my specs polished up that-a-way. You air a spry young-'un, Carolyn May."

With this heart-warming word of approval, they went in to dinner. Miss Amanda was already "dishing up." Unlike the custom at the Stagg house, the Parlows ate in the dining-room. The kitchen was small.

It seemed quite like old times to Carolyn May. Miss Amanda's way of setting the table and serving the food was like her mamma's way. There were individual bread-and-butter plates, and a knife for one's butter and another for one's meat, and several other articles of table furnishings that good Aunty Rose knew nothing about.

Carolyn May thought that Miss Amanda, in her house dress and ruffled apron, with her sleeves turned back above her dimpled, brown elbows, was prettier than ever. Miss Amanda had retained her youthfulness to a remarkable degree. Although she was quiet, there was a sparkle in her brown eyes, and a brisk note in her full, contralto voice that charmed the little girl. Her cheerful observations quite enlivened Carolyn May again.

Even Mr. Parlow proved to be amusing when he was "warmed up."

"So you didn't want to go home with Chet Gormley for dinner, eh?" he repeated. "Mebbe you thought Chet wouldn't leave nothin' for anybody else to eat?"

"Oh, no, Mr. Parlow, it wasn't that!" Carolyn May said, shaking her head.

"But it might ha' been," chuckled the carpenter, "if you'd ever seen Chet eat."

"Now, father!" admonished Miss Amanda.

"Never did see him eat, did you?" pursued the carpenter, still chuckling.

"No, sir."

"Wal, he's holler to his heels, and it's an all-fired long holler, at that! Chet worked for Deacon Allbright, out on the South Road, 'fore he went to Stagg's store. He only worked there part of a season, for he an' the deacon couldn't get along—no more'n twin brothers," declared Mr. Parlow.

"Fust place, the deacon is *raythe*r near—has enough on the table to eat, but jest enough, an' that's all. One o' them tables where there ain't no scrapin's for ary cat or dog when the folks is through. But, to hear Deacon Allbright ask a blessin' on it, you'd think ev'ry meal was a banquet.

"Wal, Chet was a boy, an' he was tearin' hungry, I reckon, when he got to the table, and the deacon's long-winded prayers was too much for Chet's appetite. With the dinner dished up and his plate full, that poor hungry little snipe had to wait while the deacon filled his mouth with big words.

"An' one day at dinner, when they had some visitors," chuckled Mr. Parlow, "it got too much for Chet Gormley. Ha'f-way through the deacon's blessin' the boy began to eat. I spect he couldn't help it. The deacon didn't have his eyes shut very tight, an' he seen him, and frowned.

"But that didn't make no manner o' odds to Chet. He'd got a taste, and his appetite was whetted. He begun mowin' away like a good feller. With righteous indignation, the deacon cleared his throat, and then ended his long prayer with this:

"'An' for what we air about to receive, *and for what Chet Gormley has already received,* let us be truly grateful.'"

Carolyn May laughed politely, but she could sympathise with poor Chet. He did look hungry, he was so long and lathlike. So they chatted throughout the meal, and the little girl began to feel better in her mind.

"I think you are lovely, Miss Amanda," she said as she helped wipe the dishes after the carpenter had gone back to the shop. "I shall always love you. I guess that anybody who ever *did* love you would keep right on doing so till they died! They just couldn't help it!"

"Well, now, that is a compliment!" laughed Miss Amanda. "You think if I once made friends I couldn't lose them?"

"I'm sure they'd always love you—*just the same,*" repeated Carolyn May earnestly. She had Uncle

Joe in mind now. "How could they help doing it? Even if—if they didn't darest show it."

"What's that?" asked Miss Amanda, looking at her curiously.

"Yes, ma'am. Maybe they wouldn't darest show it," said the little girl confidently. "But they'd just have to love you. You must be a universal fav'rite, Miss Amanda."

"Indeed?" said the woman, laughing again, yet with something besides amusement expressed in her countenance. "And how about you, Chicken Little? Aren't you universally beloved, too?"

"Oh, I don't expect so, Miss Amanda," said the child. "I wish I was."

"Why aren't you?"

"I—I— Well, I guess it's just because I'm not," Carolyn May said desperately. "You see, after all, Miss Amanda, I'm only a charity child."

"A *what?*" gasped Miss Amanda, almost dropping the salad dish she was herself wiping. "What are you, child?"

"I'm charity," Carolyn May repeated, having hard work to choke back the tears. "You know—my papa and mamma—didn't—didn't leave any money for me."

"Oh, my child!" exclaimed Miss Amanda. "Who told you that?"

"I—I just heard about it," confessed the little visitor.

"Not from Aunty Rose Kennedy?"

"Oh, no, ma'am."

"Did that— Did your uncle tell you such a thing?"

"Oh, no! He's just as good as he can be. But, of course, he doesn't much like children. You know he doesn't. And he just 'bominates dogs!

"So, you see," added the child, "I *am* charity. I'm not like other little girls that's got papas and mammas. Course, I knowed that before, but it didn't ever seem—seem so hard as it does now," she confessed, with a sob.

"My dear! my dear!" cried Miss Amanda, dropping on her knees beside the little girl, "don't talk so! I know your uncle must love you."

"Do you s'pose so?" queried Carolyn May, trying not to cry.

"He *must!* How could he help loving you? Immersed as Joseph Stagg is in business and his own selfish projects, he cannot be so hard-hearted as not to love his only sister's child."

Carolyn May clutched at her, suddenly and tightly.

"Oh, Miss Mandy!" she gasped, "don't you s'pose he loves other folks, too? You know—folks he'd begun to love ever so long ago?"

The woman's smooth cheeks burned suddenly, and she stood up.

"I'm 'most sure he'd never stop loving a person, if he'd once begun to love 'em," said Carolyn May, with a high opinion of the faithfulness of Uncle

Joe's character. "But how do I know he ever has loved me the least tiny bit?"

Miss Amanda was evidently impressed by this query. How could the child be sure? Mr. Stagg was not in the habit of revealing his deeper thoughts and feelings to the world. And, yet, if she would but admit it, Amanda Parlow believed that she, if any person could, rightly measured the hardware dealer's character.

She sat down in a low rocking-chair and drew Carolyn May into her lap. The little girl sobbed a bit, but rested her head quietly on the woman's bosom.

"Do you want to know if your Uncle Joe loves you?" she asked Carolyn May at last. "Do you?"

"Oh, I do!" cried the little girl.

"Then ask him," advised Miss Amanda. "That's the only way to do with Joe Stagg, if you want to get at the truth. Out with it, square, and ask him."

"Oh, Miss Mandy! would *you* dare?" gasped Carolyn May.

"It doesn't matter what I'd dare," said the other drily. "You go ahead and ask him—and ask him point-blank."

"I will do it," Carolyn May said seriously. Afterwards she wondered if that were not the way, too, to settle the difficulty between Uncle Joe and pretty Miss Amanda.

After the child had gone the woman went back into the little cottage, and her countenance did not

wear the farewell smile that Carolyn May had looked back to see.

Gripping at her heart was the old pain she had suffered years before, and the conflict that had seared her mind so long ago was roused again. Time, if not the great physician for all wounds, surely dulls the ache of them. Miss Amanda's emotions had been dulled during the years which had passed since she and Joseph Stagg had broken their troth. Carolyn May—surely with the best intentions in the world—had rasped this wound. The woman sat in the kitchen rocker and wrung her hands tightly as she thought.

How peacefully, how beautifully, her life had begun! She had bloomed into young womanhood and had met every prospect of happiness on its threshold. She had loved and had been loved. She had been as sure of her lover's heart in those days as she was of her own.

Then had come the crash of all her hopes and all her believing. Too proud to demand an explanation of her lover, too much her father's daughter to show Joseph Stagg what she really felt and suffered, Amanda Parlow had gone her way, not steeling her heart to tenderness, but striving to satisfy its longings with a work which, after all, she realised was a thankless task.

She lavished her sympathy on the afflicted; but, deep in her soul, she felt no satisfaction in this. She felt that the higher qualities of her nature were not

developed. She craved that satisfaction in life which a woman finds in a home, in a husband, and in little children.

"Oh, Joe! Oh, Joe! How could you?" she moaned, rocking herself to and fro. "How could you?"

CHAPTER XIII

BREAKING THROUGH

CAROLYN MAY always spent a part of each Saturday afternoon, unless it rained, in the neglected graveyard behind The Corners church. One might think that this was not a very cheerful spot for a little girl—and a dog—at any time. But the little girl, as a usual thing, carried her own cheerfulness with her.

Even on this day, when Chet Gormley's ill-advised gossip had so smitten her with secret grief, she would not let the burden she carried utterly quench her spirit. She was brave.

She did not tell Aunty Rose where she was going, although she reported her return from Sunrise Cove to that good woman and explained where she had stopped for dinner.

"Well, well, with Jedidiah Parlow and his daughter! I would not tell Joseph Stagg about it, if I were you, child," was Aunty Rose's comment.

Carolyn May had no intention of speaking to Uncle Joe about her visit to the carpenter and Miss Amanda; yet, having sounded the hardware dealer on that point before, she did not think he would really mind if she called on the "pretty lady."

There was something else—something very much more important—that she desired to talk to Uncle Joe about, and she was thinking very hard over it as she trimmed the long grass about the three little baby graves in the Kennedy lot and about the longer grave of Aunty Rose's husband.

"Now I have caught the culprit," said a voice behind her, and Carolyn May looked up to see the Reverend Afton Driggs smiling down at her.

"It had begun to puzzle me why this little patch of our old graveyard looked so much better than the rest. I might have known you had something to do with it," went on the minister.

Carolyn May sighed. "I just wish I could clean up all this cemetery. I think, maybe, it would please them."

"Please whom?" asked the minister rather startled.

"Why, the folks that are buried here! I suppose they must know about it. Their spirits, of course—the parts of 'em that keep on living. I should think it would please 'em if their graves were kept neat."

Mr. Driggs looked thoughtfully about the untidy graveyard.

"It would seem as though 'out of sight is out of mind' in many cases of old graveyards, Carolyn May. Yes, you are right. Families move away or die out entirely. The burial lots are left to the mercy of strangers.

"'Brother, keep my memory green!' And we

forget the friend who has really meant much to us—or, perhaps, we beflower the grave once a year. But that does not keep his memory green; it is only a salve to our own consciences. Perhaps Memorial Day is of doubtful value, after all."

Probably Carolyn May had not heard the clergyman's comment. Surely, she had not understood it. But she said now:

"Yes. There's Miss Wade—over yonder."

"Eh?" exclaimed the minister, turning quickly, expecting to see the person of whom Carolyn May spoke. "There's who?"

"Miss Wade. Or, I s'pose she was a miss. She's not a 'spouse,' or a 'beloved relict,' or 'wife of the above.' So, I guess, she was a maiden lady."

"Oh!" ejaculated the clergyman. "That old stone in the corner?"

"Yes, sir. That leany one. You know it says: 'Lydia Wade. Died of smallpox. *Anno Domini,* 1762.'

"I know what *anno Domini* means. It's after the birth of Christ. I thought, at first, it was the name of somebody else buried in the same grave—and that he had smallpox, too.

"It must be dreadful to have smallpox and be buried off in one corner of the graveyard by one's self. Do you s'pose they did that to Miss Wade 'cause they were 'fraid of other folks here catching it?"

"It might be, my dear," said the clergyman.

"But she was buried a long, long time ago. Probably before there was any church here."

"Well, I guess Miss Wade was buried—poor thing!—so long ago that there isn't any danger of catching the smallpox from her," sighed the little girl, yet with relief in her tone. "Anyway, I'm not afraid, for I've been vaccernated, and it *took!*"

The Reverend Afton Driggs thought this a rather gruesome subject for Carolyn May; but, with the latter, everything worth talking about at all could be given a cheerful atmosphere. She got to her feet with a sigh of satisfaction, and Prince awakened out of his doze in the shelter of the wall.

"There! I spect this is the last chance I'll have to clean up this place 'fore snow flies. Tim, the hackman, says it is bound to snow soon, and the frost *has* burned 'most all the grass."

"I presume winter is almost upon us," agreed Mr. Driggs. "Does the thought of it make you unhappy?"

"Me? Oh, no, Mr. Driggs! I guess we can be just as happy in winter as in summer—or fall—or spring. All we've got to do is to look *up,* and not *down,* all the time. See how blue the sky is! And there are wild geese flying over, aren't there?" she cried.

"Why, even the wild geese must *look up,* Mr. Driggs. They're looking for where it's going to be warm weather, with the streams and ponds open, I s'pose. So, after all, I guess they're wiser than some

human folks, even if they are geese. Don't you think so?"

"I believe you, Carolyn May," cried the minister, taking her little hand in his own as they walked out of the churchyard.

Tim, the hackman, was a true weather prophet. That very night the first snow flurry of the season drove against the west window panes of the big kitchen at the Stagg homestead. It was at supper time.

"I declare for't," said Mr. Stagg, "I guess winter's onto us, Aunty Rose."

"It has made an early start," agreed the housekeeper. "I trust you have made everything snug and fast for the season, Joseph Stagg."

"I reckon so," said the hardware dealer easily. "Plenty of wood in the shed and a full pork barrel," and he chuckled.

Just then Prince whined out on the cold porch and rattled his chain. Uncle Joe never seemed to notice it!

Carolyn May went to bed that evening in a much more serious mood than usual. Before going she got a heap of old sacks from the woodshed for poor Prince to snuggle down in.

This snow did not amount to much; it was little more than a hoar-frost, as Mr. Stagg said. It frosted the brown grass, but melted away in the paths. This might be, however, the last chance for a Sunday walk in the woods for some time, and

Carolyn May did not propose to miss it. It was the one thing Uncle Joe did for her that the little girl could hope was done because he loved her—" oh, a teeny, weeny mite! "

Of course, uncles and guardians just had to take little girls home and feed and clothe them—or else send them to a poorhouse. Carolyn May understood that. But going for a Sunday walk was different. Uncle Joe's yielding to her desire in this matter awoke the fluttering hope in the child's breast that she was beloved.

On this Sunday she wished particularly to get him off by himself. Her heart was filled with a great purpose. She felt that they must come to an understanding.

They walked to the very glade where they had met Miss Amanda Parlow, and Prince had killed the blacksnake. Somehow, their steps always seemed to turn that way. But they had never come upon Miss Amanda in their walks a second time.

On this particular occasion Uncle Joe sat down upon the log by the brook where Miss Amanda had once sat. Carolyn May stood before him.

" Uncle Joe," the little girl said, her blue eyes dark with trouble, " will you tell me something? "

" I reckon so, child, if I can," he responded, looking at her curiously.

" Am—am I just charity, Uncle Joe? "

" Huh? What's that, Car'lyn May? " he exclaimed, startled.

"Am I just a charity orphan? Didn't my papa leave *any* money a-*tall* for me? Did you take me just out of charity?"

"Bless me!" gasped the hardware dealer.

"I—I wish you'd answer me, Uncle Joe," went on Carolyn May with a brave effort to keep from crying. "Isn't there *any* money left for me—and Princey?"

Joseph Stagg was too blunt a person to see his way clear to dodging the question. And he could not speak a falsehood.

"Hum! Well, I'll tell you, Car'lyn May. There isn't *much* left, and that's a fact. It isn't your father's fault. He thought there was plenty. But a business he invested in got into bad hands, and the little nest egg he'd laid up for his family was lost."

"All lost, Uncle Joe?" quavered Carolyn May.

"All lost," repeated the hardware merchant firmly.

"Then—then I *am* just charity. And so's Prince," whispered Carolyn May. "I—I s'pose we could go to the poorhouse, Prince and me; but they mayn't like dogs there."

"What's that?" ejaculated Joseph Stagg in a sharp tone. "What's that?" he repeated.

"I—I know you aren't just used to children," went on Carolyn May, somewhat helplessly. "You're real nice to me, Uncle Joe; but Prince and me—we really are a nuisance to you."

The man stared at her for a moment in silence,

but the flush that dyed his cheeks was a flush of shame. The very word he had used on that fateful day when Carolyn May Cameron had come to The Corners! He had said to himself that she would be a nuisance.

"Maybe we ought to have gone to a poorhouse right at first," stammered the little girl, when Mr. Stagg broke in on her observation in a voice so rough that she was startled.

"Bless me, child! Who put such an idea into your head?"

"I—I thought of it myself, Uncle Joe."

"Don't you like it any more here with Aunty Rose and—and me?" he demanded.

"Oh, yes! Only—only, Uncle Joe, I don't want to stay, if we're a nuisance, Prince and me. I don't want to stay, if you don't love me."

Joseph Stagg had become quite excited. He stood up, running his fingers through his bushy hair, and knocking off his hat.

"Bless me!" he finally cried once more. "How do you know I don't love you, Car'lyn May?"

"Why—why— But, Uncle Joe! how do I know you do love me?" demanded the little girl. "*You never told me so!*"

The startled man sank upon the log again.

"Well, maybe that's so," he murmured. "I s'pose it isn't my way to be very—very—softlike. But listen here, Car'lyn May."

"Yes, sir."

"I ain't likely to tell you very frequent how much I—I think of you. Ahem! But you'd better stop worrying about such things as money and the like. What I've got comes pretty near belonging to you. Anyway, unless I have to go to the poorhouse myself, I reckon you needn't worry about going," and he coughed again drily.

"As far as us loving you— Well, your Aunty Rose loves you."

"Oh, I know she does!" agreed Carolyn May, nodding.

"Hum! How do you know that so well, and yet you don't know that I love you?"

"Oh—well—now," stammered Carolyn May, "when there isn't anybody else around but Aunty Rose and me, she tells me so."

"Hum!" Mr. Stagg cleared his throat. "Well, there isn't anybody else around here but you and me—and the dog," and his eyes twinkled; "so I'll admit, under cross-examination, that I love you."

"Oh, Uncle Joe!" She bounded at him, sobbing and laughing. "Is it really so? Do you?"

For the first time Joseph Stagg lifted her upon his knee. She snuggled up against his vest and put one little arm around his neck—as far as it would go.

"*Dear* Uncle Joe!" she sighed ecstatically. "I don't mind if I *am* charity. If you love me, it takes all the sting out. And I'll help to make you happy, too!"

"Bless me, child!" came huskily, "ain't I happy enough?"

"Why, Uncle Joe, I don't believe you can be really and truly happy, when you are always worrying about business. You don't ever seem to have time to *look up* and see the sky, or stop to hear the birds sing.

"Seems to me, Uncle Joe," concluded Carolyn May, giving a happy little jump on his lap, "that if you let your mind sort o' run on—on something besides hardware once in a while, maybe you would have time to show me how *much* you loved me. Then I wouldn't have to ask."

The man looked at her somewhat blankly. Then he turned his head, ran his hand through his bushy hair, and gazed away meditatively.

The little girl had awakened his heart. And that heart was very, very sore.

CHAPTER XIV

A FIND IN THE DRIFTS

BEFORE the week was over, winter had come to Sunrise Cove and The Corners in earnest. Snow fell and drifted, until there was scarcely anything to be seen one morning when Carolyn May awoke and looked out of her bedroom windows but a white, fleecy mantle.

This was more snow than the little girl had ever seen in New York. She came down to breakfast very much excited.

"What are we going to do about all this snow?" she asked. "Why! there isn't any janitor to shovel off the walk, and no street cleaners to clear the crosswalks! How am I ever going to get to school?"

"I reckon you'll get to school, all right, if the men get through with the ploughs before half-past eight. And if Miss Minnie gets here," chuckled Uncle Joe.

He went out and fed the fowls for Aunty Rose and did the other chores. But when he started for the store, promising to send Chet Gormley up to dig the paths, he had to wade through drifts higher than the top rail of the fences.

"Don't—don't they shovel up the snow and put it in carts and carry it all away?" asked Carolyn May of Aunty Rose.

"Who ever heard the like?" returned Mrs. Kennedy. "What kind of a way is that to do, child? And where would they cart it to? There's just as much snow in one place as there is in another."

"Why, in New York," explained the little girl, "there's always an army of men at work after a snowstorm—poor men, you know. And lots and lots of wagons. My papa used to say the snow was a blessing to the poor who wanted to earn a little money.

"Of course, lots of the men that shovel snow don't have warm coats—or mittens, even—or overshoes! They wrap their feet in potato sacks to keep them warm and dry."

"Well, well," murmured Aunty Rose. "So that's what they do with snow in the city, is it? Live and learn."

Uncle Joe had shovelled off the porch and steps, and Prince had beaten his own dooryard in the snow in front of his house. For he had a house of his own, now—a roomy, warm one—built by Mr. Parlow.

It must be confessed that, although Uncle Joe paid for the building of this dog-house, it never would have been built by Jedidiah Parlow had it not been for Carolyn May. At first the grouchy old carpenter refused to do the job.

"I ain't got to work for Joe Stagg's money—not yit, I guess," growled the carpenter. "Tell him to git somebody else to build his house."

"Oh, but Mr. Parlow," gasped Carolyn May, quite amazed, "it isn't for Uncle Joe, you know!"

"What ain't for your Uncle Joe?" demanded Mr. Parlow.

"The dog-house."

"Why ain't it? His money's goin' to pay for it, I reckon!"

"Oh, yes, that's so," admitted Carolyn May. "But Prince is going to live in it, and, you know, Prince is a friend of yours, Mr. Parlow."

"Wal, no gittin' around sich logic, I do allow," grunted the old man, his eyes twinkling, and the flush of anger dying out of his cheeks. "I s'pose it is fur the dog. And the poor beast ain't nobody's enemy. Wal!"

So Prince had his warm house for the winter. Now Carolyn May put on her rubber boots and warm coat and hood and went out to release the dog for his morning run. His "morning scramble" would be the better term on this occasion. Why, at the first bound he was buried in a drift!

"Isn't it lucky," said Carolyn May to Aunty Rose, who stood in the doorway, "that Prince can smell his way around so well? If it wasn't for his nose, he'd never be able to find his way out of those drifts. If *I* fell down in one, I know I wouldn't be able to smell my way out again."

But after Chet Gormley had come and dug the paths, and the ox-teams had come along with ploughs to break out the roads, she found it possible to go to school. She took Prince with her.

Prince had learned to behave very well at school now. He was not allowed in the schoolroom, but he remained on the porch or went back home, as he pleased. But he was always waiting at the door for his little mistress at recess and when the session closed.

At noon Uncle Joe came home, dragging a sled—a big roomy one, glistening with red paint. Just the nicest sled Carolyn May had ever seen, and one of the best the hardware dealer carried in stock.

"Oh, my, that's lovely!" breathed the little girl in awed delight. "That's ever so much better than any sled I ever had before. And Prince could draw me on it, if I only had a harness for him. He used to drag me in the park. Of course, if he saw a cat, I had to get off and hold him."

Mr. Stagg, once started upon the path of good deeds, seemed to like it. At night he brought home certain straps and rivets, and in the kitchen, much to Aunty Rose's amazement, he fitted Prince to a harness which the next day Carolyn May used on the dog, and Prince drew her very nicely along the beaten paths.

"But, if anybody would have told me, I'm free to confess I would not have believed it," Aunty Rose declared, referring to Mr. Stagg's actions in

stronger language than Carolyn May had ever heard her use before.

Carolyn May made a practice now of kissing Uncle Joe good-night when he started for the store after supper. "'Cause I'm always in bed when you get home," she explained.

Aunty Rose appeared not to notice this display of affection, and after a time Mr. Stagg got so used to it that he positively did not blush. But she climbed right into his lap and kissed him for the harness and sled, and the housekeeper felt in duty bound to comment upon it.

"You're on the road to spoil that child, Joseph Stagg," she said.

"Ahem!" coughed the hardware dealer, eyeing her with more boldness than he was usually able to display. "Ahem! I reckon somebody else around here began the spoiling—if any—Aunty Rose."

And the woman smiled grimly. "Well," she said, "*you* should not be in your second childhood—at your age."

By Saturday the roads were in splendid condition for sleighing. The heavy sleds, transporting timber or sawed planks from the camps and mills to town, packed the snow firmly.

So Carolyn May went sledding. Soberly, Prince drew the new red sled and his little mistress along the road towards Miss Amanda's. Of late the little girl wanted to see the carpenter's daughter just as frequently as possible. There was a secret under-

standing between Miss Parlow and Carolyn May—something both thought of continually, but of which neither spoke directly.

Carolyn May knew that the pretty lady was glad that Uncle Joe had come to love her. Every mark of affection that the hardware merchant showed his little niece the latter retailed to Miss Amanda, and each event lost nothing in the telling.

Now she desired to show her friend the new sled and Prince's harness. Mr. Stagg might still pass the Parlow house with his face averted; nevertheless, his praises were sung to Miss Amanda continually by Carolyn May.

"Now, Prince," said the little girl as they set forth, "I do hope we don't meet any cats—or other dogs, either. Dogs are bad enough; but, you know, if you see a cat you can*not* keep your mind on what you are doing."

Prince whined and wagged his ridiculous tail. It did seem as though he knew just what she was talking about.

However, until they got away from The Corners, at least, they met with no adventure. The blacksmith hailed Carolyn May—he was a jolly fellow—and asked her if she wanted to have her horse sharpened.

"No, thank you, Mr. Lardner," the little girl replied. "You see, Prince has got his claws, so he *can't* slip on the hard snow. He doesn't need to be sharpened like the horses."

It was not altogether a pleasant afternoon, for there was a curtain of haze being drawn over the sun, and the wind was searching. And not only did the wind cut sharply, but it blew clouds of light snow from the tops of the drifts into one's face and eyes. Carolyn May almost wished she had not started for Miss Amanda's house—and this before she was halfway to her destination.

Prince, however, did not seem to mind it much. The sled slipped easily over the beaten snow, and Carolyn May was a light load for him, for Prince was a strong dog.

Out of sight of the houses grouped at The Corners the road to town seemed as lonely as though it were a veritable wilderness. Here and there the drifts had piled six feet deep, for the wind had a free sweep across the barrens.

"Now, there's somebody coming," said Carolyn May, seeing a moving object ahead between the clouds of drifting snow spray. "Is it a sleigh, Princey, or just a man?"

She lost sight of the object, then sighted it again.

"It must be a man. It can't be a bear, Princey." Everybody had told her there were no more bears left in the woods about Sunrise Cove.

"And, anyway, I'm only afraid of bears at night —when I go up to bed in the dark," Carolyn May told herself. "Here it is broad daylight!"

Besides, if it were any such animal, Prince would surely give tongue. He only sniffed and pricked up

his ears. The strange object had disappeared again.

It was just at the place where the spring spouted out of the rocky hillside and trickled across the road. There was a sort of natural watering trough here in the rock where the horses stopped to drink. The dog drew the little girl closer to the spot.

"Where *has* that man gone to? If it was a man."

Prince stopped suddenly and whined.

"What is the matter, Princey?" demanded Carolyn May, really quite disturbed. There was something in the drift that the wind was heaping beside the beaten track. What could it be? "Prince!"

The dog barked, and then looked around at his mistress, as though to say: "See there!"

Carolyn May tumbled off the sled in a hurry. When she did so she slipped on a patch of snow-covered ice and fell. But she was not hurt.

"There! that's where the water runs across the road. It's all slippy— Oh!"

It was the sleeve of a man's rough coat thrust out of the snowbank that brought this last cry to the child's lips. In a very few moments the sign of the unfortunate wayfarer would have been completely covered in the drifting snow.

"Oh, oh! It's a man!" burst from Carolyn May's trembling lips. "How cold he must be!"

She was cold herself—and frightened. She had heard of people dying in the snow; and this person seemed perfectly helpless.

"Oh, dear me, Prince!" she cried, recovering a

measure of her courage. "We can't let him die here! We've just *got* to save him!"

She plumped down on her knees and began brushing the snow away. She uncovered his shoulder. She took hold of this with her mittened hands and tried to shake the prone figure.

He moved. It was ever so little, but it inspired Carolyn May with hope. She was not so much afraid of him now, she told herself. He was not dead.

"Oh, do wake up! Please wake up!" she cried, digging away the snow as fast as possible.

A shaggy head was revealed, with an old cap pulled down tightly over the ears. The man moved again and grunted something. He half turned over, and there was blood upon the snow, and a great frosted cake of it on the side of his face.

Carolyn May was dreadfully frightened. The man's head was cut and the blood was smeared over the front of his jacket. Now she could see a puddle of it, right where he had fallen on the ice—just as she had fallen herself. Only, he had struck his head on a rock and cut himself.

"You poor thing!" murmured Carolyn May. "Oh, you mustn't lie here! You must get up! You'll—you'll be frozen!"

"Easy, mate," muttered the man. "I ain't jest right in my top-hamper, I reckon. Hold hard, matey."

He tried to get up. He rose to his knees, but

pitched forward again. Carolyn May was not afraid of him now—only troubled.

"I'll take you to Miss Amanda," cried the little girl, pulling at his coat again. "She's a nurse, and she'll know just what to do for you. Come, Prince and I will take you."

The dog stood by whining, acting as though he knew just what the trouble was and was anxious to help. The man struggled up into a kneeling posture.

"My top-hamper ain't jest right," he murmured again. "That was a crack! Blood! I reckon I'm some hurt, miss."

"Well, I should say you were hurt!" Carolyn May responded briskly. "But I know Miss Mandy can fix you up. Let's go there—*now!* It's awfully cold standing here."

"Belike I can't get there," mumbled the man, still on his knees.

"Oh, you must! It's not far. You were coming towards The Corners, weren't you?"

"I was bound out o' town; yes, miss," the man replied.

"Miss Amanda's is the last house you passed, then. It isn't far," repeated Carolyn May.

"I—I don't believe I kin make it, matey," groaned the man, evidently not quite clear in his mind whom he was addressing. He weaved to and fro as he knelt, his eyes half-closed, muttering and groaning to himself.

"Oh, you mustn't!" cried Carolyn May. "You

mustn't give up. Crawl onto my sled. Prince and I can drag you to Miss Amanda's. Of course, we can."

"Believe you'd better leave me here, matey," muttered the man.

But Carolyn May would not hear to that. She bustled about, brought the sled closer to him, and made Prince stand around properly in his harness. Then she guided the half-blinded man to the sled, on which he managed to drop himself.

"But that dog can't never pull me, matey," he declared faintly.

"Oh, yes, he can," said Carolyn May cheerfully. "I can help, too. When you *have* to do a thing, my Aunty Rose says, you just up and do it. Now, Princey—*pull!*"

CHAPTER XV

THE OLD SAILOR

AUNTY ROSE'S philosophy must have been correct. Prince pulled, and Carolyn May pulled, and together they got the sled, with the old sailor upon it, to the Parlow carpenter shop.

Mr. Parlow slid back the front door of his shop to stare in wonder at the group.

"For the great land of Jehoshaphat!" he croaked. "Car'lyn May! what you got there?"

"Oh, Mr. Parlow, do come and help us—quick!" gasped the little girl. "My friend has had a dreadful bad fall."

"Your friend?" repeated the carpenter. "I declare, it's that tramp that went by here just now!"

"Oh, no, sir! he isn't a tramp," declared Carolyn May firmly.

"Why ain't he, I sh'd like to know?" grumbled Mr. Parlow, coming gingerly forward.

"Why, if he were, Prince wouldn't have anything to do with him," was the little girl's assured reply. "This gentleman is hurt, Mr. Parlow."

Mr. Parlow made a clucking noise in his throat when he saw the blood.

"Guess you're right, Car'lyn May," he admitted. "Call Mandy. She must see this."

Miss Amanda's attention had already been attracted to the strange arrival. She ran out and helped her father raise the injured man from the sled. Together they led him into the cottage.

He was not at all a bad-looking man, although his clothing was rough and coarse. His hands were big and square, with blunt fingers, and the fingers were half-crooked, or half-closed, all the time. Afterwards Carolyn May learned this was because the old man was a sailor and had pulled on ropes so many years.

The trained nurse and her father helped the man to the couch, after removing his pilot coat. Miss Amanda brought warm water and bathed the wound, removing the congealed blood from his face and neck.

"I think there should be a stitch or two taken in this," she said, "but Dr. Nugent is a long way off. I can dress it all right and bind it up. But if it was sewed, the wound would not leave so bad a scar."

"That's no matter—no matter at all, matey," the man hastened to say. "I've no money for them doctors."

"Ha!" coughed Mr. Parlow. "It's not a matter of dollars— Well, Mandy, if you think you can fix him up all right——"

The nurse was ready with lint and bandages and a dark, pleasant-smelling balsam in a bottle. Caro-

lyn May, who had untackled Prince on the porch, stood by, and watched Miss Amanda's skilful fingers in wonder.

The old sailor did not even groan, so the child had no idea that the drops of perspiration that gathered on his brow, and which Miss Amanda finally wiped away so tenderly, were called into being by acute suffering.

When the last bandage was adjusted and the injured man's eyes were closed, Mr. Parlow offered him a wine-glass of a home-made cordial. The sailor gulped it down, and the colour began to return to his cheeks.

"Where was you goin', anyway?" demanded the carpenter. "This ain't no good day to be travellin' in. I don't see what that child was a-thinkin' on, to be out playin' in such weather."

"Lucky for me she was out," said the sailor, more vigorously.

"Ya-as, I reckon that's so," admitted Mr. Parlow. "But, where was you goin'?"

"Lookin' for a job, mate," said the sailor. "There's them in town that tells me I'd find work at Adams' camp."

"Ha! didn't tell you 'twas ten mile away from here, did they?"

"Is it? Well, no, they didn't tell me that," admitted the visitor, "or I'd not started so late. You see, I come up on a schooner. This here lake boatin' ain't in my line. I'm deep-water, I am."

"So I should s'pose," said Mr. Parlow. "How'd you git up here, anyway?"

"The war," said the visitor. "The war done it. Couldn't git a good berth in any deep-water bottom. So I thought I'd try fresh-water sailin'. And now they tell me this here lake'll be froze up solid and all the traffic stopped all winter long."

"Likely to be," admitted Mr. Parlow.

"Don't it beat all?" murmured the sailor. "And me up in this cold country—and full of rheumatiz. I tell you, matey, I been workin' as quartermaster's mate on the old Cross and Crescent Line, a-scootin' 'cross to Naples from N'York—there and back—goin' on ten year. I ain't goin' to like it up here in this here cold, northern, snowbound country, I don't believe."

"What did you leave your boat for?" asked the carpenter curiously.

"What boat? This here lake schooner? I told you."

"No. The other."

"Oh, she was sunk. There's things happenin' over to the other side of the ocean, mate," said the injured man earnestly, "that you wouldn't believe—no, sir! The Cross and Crescent Line's give up business till after the war's over, I reckon."

"You'd better not encourage him to talk any more, father," interposed Miss Amanda, coming into the room again. "The best thing he can do for himself is to sleep for a while."

"Thank ye, ma'am," said the sailor humbly. "I'll try."

The carpenter went back to work. Miss Amanda took Carolyn May out into the kitchen. She looked at her rather curiously, and once she seemed about to speak seriously—perhaps about the injured sailor. Carolyn May sidetracked this, however, by asking:

"Don't you think Prince is a very brave dog, Miss Amanda? You know, he's almost like those Saint Bernard dogs that live in the Yalps and carry blankets and cunning little barrels around their necks to folks that get lost in the snow. You have seen pictures of 'em, haven't you, Miss Amanda?"

"Yes, my dear," agreed the pretty nurse, smiling.

"Only I never knew what the barrels were for," admitted Carolyn May. "Now, if the dogs found the poor men in the water, drownding, maybe the barrels would float and help keep 'em from sinking."

"I hardly think it probable that the barrels were for that purpose," said Miss Amanda, laughing.

"Anyway," urged Carolyn May, "Prince is just as brave as those other dogs."

"Indeed, yes," agreed the woman. "And I think that a certain little girl is very brave, too."

"Oh, but I couldn't have got the poor gentleman here, if it hadn't been for Prince."

"Quite true. And he deserves a reward for that. We'll call him in and give him a party," said Miss Amanda. "I have been saving some chicken bones for him."

"Oh, my dear!" cried Carolyn May, "he just adores chicken bones. You are the very kindest lady, Miss Amanda! I love you, heaps and heaps—and so does Prince."

Darkness came on apace. The sky had become overcast, and there was promise of a stormy night—more snow, perhaps. But Miss Amanda would not allow Carolyn May and Prince to start for home at once.

"Watch for your uncle, Carolyn May, out of the front-room window, and be all ready to go with him when he comes along," said Miss Parlow. "No, it isn't time for him yet. When the clock says ten minutes to five you can begin to look for him."

"Oh, my! Miss Amanda," said Carolyn May wonderingly, "how well you know his time for coming home, don't you?"

Miss Amanda blushed and did not appear to think that question needed an answer. After that she seemed much preoccupied in mind.

When Uncle Joe came along, Carolyn May ran out and hailed him from the porch.

"Wait for me, Uncle Joe! Wait for me and Princey, please! Just let me get my mittens and Prince's harness and kiss Miss Mandy."

That last she did most soundly, and in full view of the man waiting in the white road. Miss Amanda's tenderness, as she knelt on the porch to button Carolyn May's coat, was marked by the hardware dealer—and also her shining brown hair and

her eyes so bright and sparkling. But he made no comment on this picture when his little niece joined him.

"Oh, Uncle Joe, I've got just the wonderfulest story to tell you! Shall we harness Prince up again, or will you——"

"I can't wait for the dog, Car'lyn May. I'm in a hurry. You oughtn't to be out in this wind, either. Get aboard your sled, now, and I'll drag you myself," Mr. Stagg interrupted.

She obeyed him gaily. When he started off, she turned to wave her mittened hand to Miss Amanda, who still stood on the porch. But the door of the carpenter shop, where a lamp burned, was shut tightly.

"That woman will get her death of cold," grumbled Uncle Joe, starting off at a round pace. "Don't know enough to go in out o' the cold."

But Amanda Parlow did not notice the cold. She was thinking of a time, oh, so long ago! when Joe Stagg had seated her on his bright red sled and given her a ride. How her heart had beat when he had turned to gaze at her! And now— Slowly her eyes filled with tears, and again:

"Oh, Joe! Joe! How could you?"

CHAPTER XVI

A SALT-SEA FLAVOUR

SWIFTLY Joseph Stagg trudged towards home, dragging Carolyn May behind him.

"Oh, dear me!" exclaimed the little girl with exultation, "we're all so excited, Uncle Joe!"

"I can see you're all of a-twitter," he returned absent-mindedly. "What's the matter?"

"Oh, you never could guess!" was Carolyn May's introduction, and forthwith, in breathless sentences, went on to tell of her discovery in the snow and about the old sailor now lying asleep on the Parlow couch.

"I vum!" ejaculated Uncle Joe, when he had listened to it all. "Who ever heard the beat of that! And Jed Parlow really helped take him in, did he? The day of miracles isn't past, then, that's sure."

Of course, when Carolyn May arrived at home, the story had to be told all over again to Aunty Rose Kennedy—all the details, even to Prince's feast of chicken bones. If the housekeeper was surprised—as Joseph Stagg had been—that the carpenter should take the injured man into his house, she did not say so.

"A mighty plucky youngster, this Car'lyn May of ours," Uncle Joe remarked. "What do you say, Aunty Rose?"

"She is, indeed, Joseph Stagg," agreed the woman.

Carolyn May was very much excited over the adventure, and, although it snowed some that night and the paths were drifted full in places, she wanted greatly to go down to the Parlow house the next day to see her "sailor man," as she called the unfortunate she had assisted.

Naturally, she could not expect Uncle Joe to stop and ask how the sailor was, he not being on speaking terms with the Parlows; but the hardware dealer did pick up a morsel of news about the stranger and brought it home at noon time to detail to Aunty Rose and the little girl at the dinner table.

"I tell you," Mr. Stagg maintained, "Jed Parlow's had a change of heart, or something. Know what he's done?"

"I could not guess, Joseph Stagg," said Aunty Rose austerely.

"Why, he's letting that old tramp Car'lyn May picked up stay there till he gets well enough to work, so they tell me. Who ever heard the like? And Jed hasn't a blessed thing for a man like that tramp to do at this time of year."

"It's Miss Amanda that lets him stay, I guess," said Carolyn May with a wise little nod of her sunny head.

"Hum!" grunted her uncle. "Time was when Jed Parlow wouldn't have played the part of a good Samaritan to the Angel Gabriel himself."

"You should not say such things in the hearing of the child," admonished Aunty Rose severely. "Perhaps Jedidiah Parlow has been misjudged all these years. He may have a kinder heart than you think."

"Kind-hearted!" snorted Mr. Stagg. "If he's got a heart at all, he's successfully hidden it for nigh seventy years, from all I've heard tell."

"Oh, Uncle Joe, he *must* have a heart, you know," broke in Carolyn May earnestly. "We had physerology studies in the school I used to go to, and you have to have hearts, and lungs, and livers, and other inwards, or else you couldn't keep going. Mr. Parlow must have a heart."

"I s'pose he must," acknowledged Uncle Joe, "from that standpoint. But, aside from its pumping blood through his arteries, his heart action hasn't been what you might call excessive. And for him to take that old codger in out o' the snow——"

Aunty Rose interrupted, as she often did at such times, sternly.

"Joseph Stagg, for a man with ordinary, good common sense, as you've got, you do sometimes 'pear to be pretty near purblind. I shouldn't wonder if Jedidiah Parlow has changed of late. It is more than probable."

Then, as Mr. Stagg continued to stare at her,

plainly surprised by her vehemence, the housekeeper continued:

"Nor is he the only person that shows signs of change—and from the same cause. Have you never stopped to think of other changes nearer home that have been brought about by the same means? Answer me, Joseph Stagg."

The hardware dealer cast a quick glance at Carolyn May, busy with her knife and fork, and had the grace to blush a little. Then, suddenly, his eyes twinkled, and a smile wreathed the corners of his mouth.

"Hold on, Aunty Rose. I say! do you ever look in the mirror?"

"Never mind about me, Joseph Stagg," she rejoined rather tartly. "Never mind about me!"

Carolyn May insisted on going to the Parlow house herself after school that afternoon to enquire about her "sailor man." She just had to know personally how he was getting on!

The steady stream of timber sleds from Adams' camp, and others, had beaten down the drifts again, so Aunty Rose made no objection to the little girl and the dog's making this call.

Mr. Parlow peered at them through the window of the carpenter's shop and waved his hand; but Carolyn May went right into the house. When she had been kissed by Miss Amanda, and Prince had lain down by the kitchen range, the little girl demanded:

"And do tell me how my sailor man is, Miss Mandy. He got *such* a bump on the head!"

"Yes; the man's wound is really serious. I'm keeping him in bed. But you can go up to see him. He's talked a lot about you, Carolyn May."

"Is that so?" eagerly cried the little girl. "And I'm just as cur'ous about him as I can be."

"Why are you so curious about him?" asked Miss Amanda.

"Because he's a sailor and has been away across the ocean—right to the place my papa and mamma were going to when the *Dunraven* was sunk. Don't you see? They were going to Naples. That's in Italy. And this sailor man told Mr. Parlow, Miss Amanda, that he has been to Naples. So he must have been through that Mediterranean Ocean, or sea, or whatever it is—right where my papa and mamma were lost."

The sailor lay in the warm bedroom over the kitchen. In bed, with his head bound up as though it were in a huge nightcap, he looked oddly like a gnome, for he was banked up with pillows, and wore one of Mr. Parlow's flannelette nightshirts, which was too small for him. In spite of his odd habiliments, his was a cheerful face—red, with few wrinkles, save about his eyes, and a scattering brush of grey bristles along his jaw, for he needed a shave.

"Hello, my hearties!" was his rumbling greeting when Carolyn May and Miss Amanda appeared.

"This is the little miss I've got to thank for savin' me yesterday."

"And my dog, sir," said Carolyn May. "He's downstairs by the stove. Of course, I couldn't have brought you here on my sled, if it hadn't been for Princey."

"That's a fine dog," agreed the sailor. "I ain't never seen a finer."

Carolyn May warmed to him more and more at this enthusiastic praise. She prattled on gaily and soon had her "sailor man" telling all about the sea and ships, and "they that go down therein."

"For, you see," explained Carolyn May, "I'm dreadful cur'ous about the sea. My papa and mamma were lost at sea."

"You don't say so, little miss!" exclaimed the old fellow. "Aye, aye, that's too bad."

Miss Amanda had disappeared, busy about some household matter, and the little girl and the sailor were alone together.

"Yes," Carolyn May proceeded, "it is dreadful hard to *feel* that it is so."

"Feel that what's so, little miss?" asked the man in bed.

"That my papa and mamma are really drownd-ed," said the little girl with quivering lips. "Some of the folks on their boat were saved. The papers said so."

"Aye, aye!" exclaimed the sailor, his brows puckered into a frown. "Aye, aye, matey! that's allus

the way. Why, I was saved myself from a wreck. I was in the first officer's boat, and we in that boat was saved. There was another boat—the purser's, it was—was driftin' about all night with us. We come one time near smashin' into each other and wreckin' both boats. There was a heavy swell on.

"Yet," pursued the sailor, "come daylight, and the fog splittin,' we never could find the purser's boat. She had jest as good a chance as us after the steamship sank. But there it was! We got separated from her, and we was saved, whilst the purser's boat wasn't never heard on again."

"That was dreadful!" sighed the little girl.

"Yes, little miss. And the poor passengers! Purser had twenty or more in his boat. Women mostly. But there was a sick man, too. Why, I helped lower his wife and him into the boat 'fore I was called to go with the first officer in his boat. We was the last to cast off. The purser had jest as good a chance as we did.

"I guess I won't never forgit that time, little miss," went on the seaman, seeing the blue eyes fixed on his face, round with interest. "No! And I've seen some tough times, too.

"The ship was riddled. She had to sink—and it was night. We burned Coston lights, and our signal gun banged away for help, and the old siren tooted. The wireless top-hamper had been shot away in the fust place.

"We didn't have no chance at all to save the ship.

Some of the boats was smashed. Two was overturned jest as they struck the water. There wasn't any of the life rafts launched at all. But we didn't have much of a panic; the steerage passengers was jest like dumb cattle.

"They was goin' back to Italy because of the war—the men to fight, the women and children so's to benefit by the Government pay to soldiers' families."

This was mostly beyond Carolyn May's comprehension, but she listened to the sailor with serious attention. The seaman told his story as though it really were unforgetable.

"There was the sick man I told you about, little miss. He was a wonder, that feller! Cheerful—brave— Don't often see a feller like him. Jokin' to the last, he was. He didn't want to go in the purser's boat, if there was more women or children to go.

"We told him all the women folk had left the ship. So, then, he let me lower him down into the purser's boat after his wife. And that boat had as good a chance as we had, I tell you," repeated the seaman in quite an excited manner.

"Oh, dear me!" exclaimed Carolyn May. "My papa and mamma might have been just like that," she added. "Of course, we don't know whether they got off the steamship at all."

"Aye, aye!" the sailor said. "Pretty tough on you, little miss."

Miss Amanda had come back into the room, and she stood listening to the old man's talk. She said:

"Carolyn May, I think you had better go downstairs now. We mustn't let our patient talk too much. It won't be good for him."

So Carolyn May shook hands with the old sailor and started downstairs ahead of Miss Amanda. The latter lingered a moment to ask a question.

"What was the name of the steamship you were wrecked on?" she asked. "The one you were just telling about."

"She was the *Dunraven*—the *Dunraven,* of the Cross and Crescent Line," replied the mariner. "Didn't I tell you that before, ma'am?"

CHAPTER XVII

WILL WONDERS NEVER CEASE?

AGAIN it snowed all night.

"My goodness me!" sighed Carolyn May the next morning when she arose, to find all the paths filled up again. "Don't it *ever* stop snowing till springtime comes around again, Aunty Rose?"

"Oh, yes," answered the housekeeper, smiling quietly. "But I thought you loved the snow?"

"I do," the child responded. "Anyway, I guess I do," she added. "But—but couldn't they spread it out a little thinner? Seems to me we must be getting it all at once. Why, I can't see any of the walls or fences!"

That was true enough. Uncle Joe had even to dig Prince out of his house that morning. After that, when it stormed, Prince was allowed to lie by the kitchen fire—certainly a great concession on Aunty Rose's part.

This was really the heaviest storm of the season, so far. When Carolyn May floundered to school, with Prince going in front to break the path, there was a huge bank of snow piled against one corner

of the schoolhouse. This quite closed up the boys' door, and only the girls' entrance could be used.

But the boys got to work at recess and tunnelled through the great drift, so that there was a passage to their door. The wind had packed the snow hard, and the crust had frozen, so there was a safe roof over the tunnel through the snow.

At noon some of the girls went through the passage, too; and among them was Carolyn May. As she went down the steps she laughed gleefully, crying:

"Oh, it's like going into the subway, isn't it?"

"What's the subway?" asked Freda Payne instantly. "You don't mean to say you have snow tunnels like this in the city, do you? You said men carted the snow all away in wagons, or melted it. Can't be much snow where you come from, Car'lyn May."

"Oh, no; not snow tunnels," the city child explained. She had to do a good deal of explaining these days. "The subway's just a hole in the ground, and you go down steps into it, and it's all—all marble, I guess, 'cause it's white and shiny. And trains come along, and you get on, and you ride all the way from One Hundred and Twenty-fifth Street down to papa's office, and——"

"Oh, Car'lyn May Cam'ron!" shrieked Freda.

"Trains under the ground?" demanded another of her schoolmates.

"Yes," said the little city girl.

"Trains of *cars?* Like our trains up here?"

"Ye-es," said Carolyn May slowly, feeling that her tale was disbelieved.

"My mercy!" declared the black-eyed girl. "That's the biggest story you've told us yet. I'm going to tell my mamma about that. She says you've got such a 'magination. But I know *this* is just plain fib, and nothing else—so there!"

It hurt Carolyn May sorely to have her word doubted. She had begun to shrink from telling her little friends about any of the wonders which had been such commonplace matters to her when she had lived in New York. They simply could not believe the things the city child said were so.

It was on this very day, and at noon time, when Mr. Stagg was returning to the store, that a most astounding thing happened.

Had Mrs. Gormley seen it, that good woman would have had such a measure of gossip to relate as she had not enjoyed for a long time. It was, indeed, a most amazing occurrence.

Mr. Stagg was walking briskly towards Sunrise Cove in his big felt snow-boots, such as all men wore in that locality, and was abreast of the Parlow shop and cottage—which he always sought to avoid looking at—when he heard a door open and close.

He tried not to look that way. But his ear told him instantly that the person who had come out was Miss Amanda, rather than her father. Knowing this, how could he help darting a glance at her?

For more years than he cared to count, Joseph Stagg had been passing back and forth along this road. Sometimes, in his secret heart, he wished the Parlow place would burn down, or be otherwise swept from its site. It was an abomination to him. Yet he was always tempted to steal a glance as he passed, in hope of seeing Miss Amanda. He often saw Mr. Parlow staring from his shop at him, his grey old face puckered into a scowl, but the carpenter's daughter was seldom in evidence when Mr. Stagg went by. She might be, at such times, behind the front-room blinds peering out at him; but he did not know that.

It had not always been so. As Chet Gormley's gossipy mother had told Carolyn May, time was when the hardware dealer—then having just opened his store in Sunrise Cove—and the carpenter's daughter were frequently together.

Often when Joseph Stagg came in sight of the Parlow residence Amanda was at the gate. She sometimes walked to town with him. He even remembered—but that was still earlier in their lives—pulling her on his red sled. There had never been any other girl Joe Stagg cared for. And now——

He ventured another quick glance towards the Parlow side of the road. Miss Amanda stood on the porch, looking directly at him.

"Mr. Stagg," she called earnestly, "I must speak to you."

Save on the Sunday when Prince had killed the

blacksnake, Miss Amanda had not spoken directly to the hardware merchant in all these hungry years. It rather shocked Joseph Stagg now that she should do so.

"Will you come in?" she urged him, her voice rather tremulous.

There was a moment of absolute silence.

"Bless me! Yes!" ejaculated the hardware man finally.

He turned in at the path to the gate, opened the latter, and reached the porch. He was quite himself when he arrived before her.

"I assure you, Mr. Stagg," Miss Amanda said hurriedly, "it is no personal matter that causes me to stop you in this fashion."

"No, ma'am?" responded the man stiffly.

He was looking directly at her now, and it was Miss Amanda who could not bring her gaze to meet his. Her face had first flushed, and now was pale. The long lashes, lowered over her brown eyes, curled against her smooth cheek. Like Carolyn May, Mr. Stagg thought her a very lovely lady, indeed.

"I want you to come in and speak with this sailor who was hurt," she finally said. "Carolyn May has told you about him, hasn't she?"

"The whole neighbourhood has been talking about it," returned Joseph Stagg grimly.

"Yes, I suppose so," Miss Amanda said hastily. "There is something he can tell you, Mr. Stagg, that I think you should know."

To say that he was puzzled would be putting it mildly. Mr. Stagg felt as though he were in a dream as he followed Miss Amanda indoors. And he expected an awakening at any moment.

"My father has gone into town, Mr. Stagg," explained Miss Amanda, leading the way through the hall, or "entry," into the kitchen.

The cheerful little kitchen, full of light and warmth, was very attractive to Mr. Stagg. He had not been in it for a long time. The big rocking-chair by the window, in which Miss Amanda's mother had for several years before her death spent her waking hours, was now occupied by the sailor. His head was still swathed in bandages, but his grey eyes were keen, and he nodded briskly to the storekeeper.

"This is the little girl's uncle, Benjamin," Miss Amanda said quietly. "He will be interested in what you have already told me about the loss of the *Dunraven*. Will you please repeat it all?"

"The *Dunraven?*" gasped Mr. Stagg, sitting down without being asked. "Hannah——"

"There is no hope, of course," Amanda Parlow spoke up quickly, "that your sister, Mr. Stagg, and her husband were not lost. But having found out that Benjamin was on that steamer with them, I thought you should know. I have warned him to be careful how he speaks before Carolyn May. You may wish to hear the story at first hand."

"Thank you," choked Joseph Stagg. He wanted to say more, but could not.

Benjamin Hardy's watery eyes blinked, and he blew his nose.

"Aye, aye, mate!" he rumbled, "hard lines—for a fact. I give my tes-ti-mony 'fore the consul when we was landed—so did all that was left of us from the *Dunraven*. Me bein' an unlettered man, they didn't run me very clos't. I can't add much more to it.

"As I say, that purser's boat your sister and her sickly husband was in had jest as good a chance as we had. We nigh bumped into each other soon after the *Dunraven* sunk. So, then, we pulled off aways from each other. Then the fog rolled up from the African shore—a heap o' fog, mate. It sponged out the lamp in the purser's boat. We never seen no more of 'em—nor heard no more."

He went on with other particulars, but all, so Mr. Stagg thought, futile and pointless. He knew the steamship, *Dunraven,* had sunk; and what mattered it whether Hannah and her husband had gone down with her or gone down with the purser's boat a few hours later? In his agony of spirit, he said something like this—and rather brusquely—to the old seaman.

"Aye, aye," admitted Benjamin Hardy. "'Twould seem so to a landsman. But there is many a wonder of the sea that landsmen don't know about, sir."

"Tell Mr. Stagg about the fog and the current, Benjamin," urged Miss Amanda.

Joseph Stagg looked across the room at Miss Amanda, but he listened to the sailor. Benjamin Hardy had plainly thought much about the incidents surrounding the loss of the *Dunraven*. Perhaps, as time passed, and he saw those incidents in better perspective, his wondering about them had evolved theories. Whether these theories were to be accepted without suspicion was another matter.

Joseph Stagg was not a credulous man. Indeed, he was, in a business sense, suspicious. Mr. Parlow had said that Joe Stagg bit every quarter he took in over his counter to find out whether it was lead or silver!

The hardware dealer listened now to the sailor's rather wandering tale with more patience than interest. Indeed, it was as much out of politeness to Miss Amanda as anything that kept him from interrupting.

"It was the current confused us. The purser had a sea anchor out," said Benjamin Hardy. "Something like a drag, mister. Kept his boat from driftin'. And that's how us in the first officer's boat come nigh smashin' into him. There's a strong set of the current towards the African coast in them parts.

"Well, sir, after the two boats come so nigh smashin' into each other, the purser must have slipped his drag. Anyway, the fog come up thick from the south and hid their lights from us. We never heard no cry, nor nothin'. Then, after day-

break, the French battleships that had stood by picked us up, but we couldn't find the purser's boat.

"The fog still lay as thick as a blanket to the so'th'ard—how thick and how far we didn't know. And the Frenchman, I reckon, was afraid it might hide more of the enemy, and she was crippled. No, sir, if the purser's boat had drifted off that way—and the set of the tide was that way, I know—we couldn't have seen nor heard her if she was more'n a mile off."

"And were Hannah—were my sister and her husband in that boat?" queried Mr. Stagg thoughtfully.

"I am sure, by the details Benjamin has given me," said Miss Amanda softly, "that your sister and Mr. Cameron were two of its passengers."

"Well, it's a long time ago, now," said the hardware dealer. "Surely, if they had been picked up or had reached the coast of Africa, we would have heard about it."

"It would seem so," the woman agreed gently.

"You never know what may happen at sea, mister, till it happens," Benjamin Hardy declared. "What became of that boat——"

He seemed to stick to that idea. But the possibility of the small boat's having escaped seemed utterly preposterous to Mr. Stagg. He arose to depart.

"Of course, you won't say anything to the child to disturb her mind," he said. "Poor little thing! It's hard enough for her as it is."

"I'll keep my jaws clamped shut like a clam, mister," declared the sailor.

Miss Amanda followed the hardware dealer to the outer door. She hesitated to speak, yet Mr. Stagg's unhappy face won an observation from her.

"Oh, don't you suppose there is *any* chance of their being alive?" she whispered.

"After all these months?" groaned Mr. Stagg. "The old fellow may tell the truth, as far as he's gone, and as far as he knows; but if they were alive we'd have heard about it before now. That African coast isn't a desert—nor yet a wilderness—nowadays. Those Arabs have been pretty well tamed, I reckon. No, we'd have heard long before this."

"I'm sorry," said Miss Amanda simply.

"Thank—thank you," murmured Joseph Stagg before she closed the door.

He went on to town, his mind strangely disturbed. It was not his sister's fate that filled his heart and brain, but thoughts of Miss Amanda.

She had deliberately broken the silence of years! Of course, it might be attributed to her interest in Carolyn May only, yet the hardware dealer wondered.

He could not get interested in the big ledger that afternoon. Old Jimmy, the cat, leaped upon his desk, purring, and walked right across the fair page of the book, making an awful smudge where the ink was not dry, and Joseph Stagg merely said: "Scat, Jimmy!" and paid no further attention.

Out through the office window he stared, and out of the transom above the front door. He could see a blue patch of sky, across which now and then a grey-white cloud floated. In those floating clouds Mr. Stagg began to read a future which had little to do with the dull prospect of the hardware store itself.

"Look up!"

The thought came to him while his countenance was a-smile. His reverie had surely inspired a pleasanter feeling within and a happier expression without. Carolyn May's reiterated phrase rather startled Joseph Stagg.

"Why, the child's right," he murmured. "It's looking up makes a man dream of happiness. But—it's only a dream, I reckon. Only a dream."

His immediate thoughts did not fall into the old groove, however. Not at once. When he went home to supper that evening he boldly stared at the Parlow house, on the watch for something. There were lights in the kitchen and the dining-room. And was that a figure moving cautiously behind the lace curtains at the front-room window?

CHAPTER XVIII

SOMETHING CAROLYN MAY WISHES TO KNOW

CAROLYN MAY'S heart was filled with trouble. She had, ere this, proved herself to be a deeply thoughtful child, and the grown people about her did not suspect how much she was disturbed by a new subject of thought.

This was the result of her first talk with the old sailor. Not from him, nor from anybody else, did Carolyn May get any direct information that the sailor had been aboard the *Dunraven* on her fatal voyage. But his story awoke in the child's breast doubts and longings, uncertainties and desires that had lain dormant for many weeks.

"I do wish, Princey," she told her mongrel friend, her single really close confidant, "that my papa and mamma were like the folks buried there behind the church," and she sighed.

"I'd know just where they were, then. That part of 'em that's dead, I mean. But now we don't know much about it, do we?

"Being lost at sea is such a dreadful unsatisfactory way of having your folks dead."

Uncle Joe and Aunty Rose loved her and were

kind to her. But that feeling of "emptiness" that had at first so troubled Carolyn May was returning. Kind as her new friends here at The Corners and at Sunrise Cove were, there was something lacking in the little girl's life.

Nothing could make up to her for the jolly companionship of her father. Even while his health was declining, he had made all about him happier by his own cheerful spirit. And the little girl longed, more and more, for her mother. She had followed her father's axiom to "look up" and had benefited by it; but, at last, her loneliness and homesickness had become, it seemed, too great to endure.

She began to droop. Keen-eyed Aunty Rose discovered this physical change very quickly.

"She's just like a droopy chicken," declared the good woman, "and, goodness knows, I have seen enough of them."

So, as a stimulant and a preventive of "droopiness," Aunty Rose prescribed boneset tea, "plenty of it." Now, she loved Carolyn May very much, even if she could not bring herself to the point of showing her affection before others; but boneset tea is an awful dose!

Carolyn May took the prescribed quantity and shook all over. She could not bear the taste of bitter things, and this boneset, or thoroughwort, had the very bitterest taste she had ever encountered.

"Do—do you think it's good for me, Aunty Rose?" she asked quaveringly.

"It certainly is, Carolyn May."

"Well—*but,*" returned the little girl, "wouldn't something else do me good—only, maybe, slower—that wasn't so awfully bitter? I—I'm afraid I'll never learn to like this boneset tea—not really, Aunty Rose."

"We are not supposed to like medicine," declared Aunty Rose, being a confirmed allopath.

"Oh, aren't we?" the little girl cried. "I 'member being sick once—at home, with my mamma and papa—and a doctor came. A real nice doctor, with eyeglasses. And he gave me cunning little pills of different colours. I didn't mind taking them; they were like candy."

Aunty Rose shook her head decidedly and negatively.

"I do not believe in such remedies," she said. "Medicine is like punishment—unless it hurts, of what use is it?"

Therefore three times a day Carolyn May was dosed with boneset tea. How long the child's stomach would have endured under this treatment will never be known. Carolyn May got no better, that was sure; but one day something happened.

Winter had moved on in its usual frosty and snowy way. Carolyn May had kept up all her interests—after a fashion. She went to school, and she visited Miss Amanda, and her sailor man held her attention. But they were just surface interests. "Inside" she was all sick, and sorry, and prone to tears; and it

was not altogether the boneset tea that made her feel so unsettled, either.

Benjamin Hardy had gone to Adams' camp to work. It seemed he could use a peevy, or canthook, pretty well, having done something besides sailing in his day. Tim, the hackman, worked at logging in the winter months, too. He usually went past the Stagg place with a team four times each day.

There was something Carolyn May wished to ask Benjamin Hardy, but she did not want anybody else to know what it was—not even Uncle Joe or Aunty Rose. Miss Amanda had gone across town to stay with a lady who was ill, so the little girl could not take her into her confidence, had she so wished.

Anyway, it was the seaman Carolyn May wished to talk with, and she laid her plans accordingly. Once in the fall and before the snow came she had ridden as far as Adams' camp with Mr. Parlow. He had gone there for some hickory wood.

But, now, to ride on the empty sled going in and on top of the load of logs coming out of the forest, Carolyn May felt sure, would be much more exciting. She mentioned her desire to Uncle Joe on a Friday evening.

"Well, now, if it's pleasant, I don't see anything to forbid. Do you, Aunty Rose?" Mr. Stagg returned.

"I presume Tim will take the best of care of her," the woman said. "Maybe, getting out more in the air will make her look less peaked, Joseph Stagg."

The hardware dealer stared at his little niece with knitted brow.

"Does she look peaked, Aunty Rose?" he asked anxiously.

"She doesn't look as robust as I could wish."

"Say! she isn't sick, is she? You don't feel bad, do you, Car'lyn May?"

"Oh, no, Uncle Joe," the child hastened to say, remembering vividly the boneset tea. "I'm quite sure I'm not ill."

The excitement of preparing to go to the camp the next morning brought the roses into Carolyn May's cheeks and made her eyes sparkle. When Tim, the hackman, went into town with his first load he was forewarned by Aunty Rose that he would have company going back.

"Pitcher of George Washington!" exclaimed Tim. "The boys will near 'bout take a holiday. You tell her to put on her red hood and a blue hair-ribbon, and she'll be as purty as a posy to go a-visiting."

"Never mind what she wears, Timothy," said Aunty Rose sternly. "You see that she gets back here safely."

"Surest thing you know, Miz Kennedy," agreed the man.

Carolyn May—and, of course, Prince—were ready when Tim came back with the empty sled, or "jumper," as he called it. He had thrown a number of sacks upon it, on which she might sit, and they

started off briskly. The bells on the horses' collars jingled a merry tune.

Prince bounded about the sled in wild delight, barking madly. Such an adventure as this was quite to his liking.

"I vow!" croaked Timothy, "I've often thought I'd like to be a dog—some men's dog, I mean. They ain't got nothin' to trouble 'em—'nless it's a few fleas. And maybe *they* ain't such a heavy cross and burden. They give the dog good healthy exercise a-scratchin' of 'em.

"Now, look at that Prince critter, will you? He's all of a broad grin—happy as a clam at high water. He don't hafter worry about rent, or clo'es, or how to meet the next payment on the pianner. He sure is in an easy state of mind."

"Yes," Carolyn May agreed, "I think Prince is a very cheerful dog. Why, he almost laughs sometimes!"

"I reckon he does," agreed Tim. "Only, dumb critters don't never really laff."

"Oh, yes, they do!" cried Carolyn May, eager to give information when she could. "Anyhow, *some* animals do."

"Pitcher of George Washington!" ejaculated the man. "What animals, I'd be proud ter know?"

"Why, there were some of them at the Zoo. That's 'way up in the Bronx, you know."

"What's the Brow-n-x?" interrupted Tim as they jounced along.

"Why—why, it's a park. Bigger'n Central Park, you know—oh! ever so much bigger. And they have lots of animals—wild animals."

"Not *loose?*" cried her listener.

"Oh, no. That is, not all of them. Some are in big fields, or yards; but there are fences up."

"Yep, I sh'd hope so," returned Tim. "And, if I was goin' to visit 'em, I sh'd want them fences to be horse high, hog tight, and bull strong. I sure would!"

"Well, but the laughing hyenas are in cages," explained Carolyn May.

"Do tell! An' do they laff? They must be good-natured critters, after all, them—what d'ye call 'em—laffin' hannahs?"

"Hy-*e*-nas," repeated Carolyn May carefully. "They look something like dogs—only they aren't. And they look something like zebras—only they aren't. And when they do laugh, Mr. Tim, it just makes the cold chills run up and down your back. Oh, they are dreadful ugly beasts! So laughing don't always make things good-natured, does it?"

"Pitcher of George Washington!" murmured Tim, the hackman, staring at her wide-eyed. "What a 'magination that young one's got!"

But the little girl did not hear this comment, else she would have been unhappy.

They jogged along very comfortably, reaching the camp a little before noon. Adams' camp was the largest lumber camp near Sunrise Cove; but it

was a raw-looking place—nothing but a clump of sheet-iron sheds and log huts.

The snow on the roofs, and the fact that the drifts hid many unsightly things, made the place seem less crude than it really was. Still, Carolyn May was doubtful as to whether or not she would like to live there.

There was but one woman in the camp, Judy Mason. She lived in one of the log huts with her husband. He was a sawyer, and Judy did the men's washing.

Benjamin Hardy was pleased, indeed, to see his little friend again. She sought him out as soon as the engineer blew the whistle for the noon rest, and they went into the bunk-house together, where more than forty men gathered around the long table for dinner.

There was no tablecloth, and the food was served in basins, and they ate off tin pie plates, and drank out of tin mugs. But the men were a jolly crowd, and the dinner hour was enlivened by jokes and good-natured foolery.

Carolyn May appreciated their attempts to amuse her, but she clung close to Benjamin, for she had a question in her mind that only he, she thought, could answer.

"You come with me, please," she whispered to the old seaman after dinner. "You can smoke. You haven't got to go back to work yet, and Tim is only just loading his sled. So we can talk."

"Aye, aye, little miss. What'll we talk about?" queried Benjamin cautiously, for he remembered that he was to be very circumspect in his conversation with her.

"I want you to tell me something, Benjamin," she said.

"Sail ahead, matey," he responded with apparent heartiness, filling his pipe meanwhile.

"Why, Benjamin—you must know, you know, for you've been to sea so much—Benjamin, I want to know if it hurts much to be drownd-ed?"

"Hurts much?" gasped the old seaman.

"Yes, sir. Do people that get drownd-ed feel much pain? Is it a sufferin' way to die? I want to know, Benjamin, 'cause my papa and mamma died that way," continued the child, choking a little. "It does seem as though I'd just *got* to know."

"Aye, aye," muttered the man. "I see. An' I kin tell ye, Car'lyn May, as clos't as anybody kin. I've been so near drownin' myself that they thought I was dead when I was hauled inboard.

"That was when I sailed in the old *Paducah,* a cotton boat, from N'Orleans to Liverpool. That was long 'fore I got to runnin' on the Cross and Crescent Line boats, 'cause steamships is easier to work on than sailin' vessels.

"Well, now, listen. We used to carry almighty cargoes—yes'm. Decks loaded till we could scarce handle sail. She was down to the mark, and then some. An' if it come on to blow, we was all in

"Do people that get drownd-ed feel much pain?"

danger of our lives. Owners cared more for freight money than they did for the lives of her crew."

"Oh! How very wicked!" exclaimed Carolyn May, her mind led somewhat away from the gruesome question she had propounded to Benjamin.

"'Twas that, indeed," agreed the sailor, puffing on his pipe. "The old *Paducah* sometimes rolled through the wash like she was top-heavy. And if the swell got too strong for her we had to jettison the top tiers of cotton bales—pitch 'em overboard, you see."

"Oh!"

"An' one day, when the old craft was rollin' till her yards nigh touched the sea, I was loosin' the upper tier of bales and slidin' 'em overboard, when over *I* went with one of 'em."

"Oh, Benjamin! Never!"

"Aye, aye, matey. That's what I done," said the old man, sucking away on his pipe. "There was me in the sea, hangin' on to a balehook that was stuck in the cotton. The old *Paducah* rushed by me, it seemed, like an express train past a cripple."

"But you weren't drownd-ed!" exclaimed Carolyn May.

"No-o. But I was near it—mighty near it. They seen me go, an' I heard the cry, 'Man overboard!' when I come up after my first plunge. I knowed they'd wear ship and send a boat after me. So, first off, I thought I'd hang to the balehook and be all right.

"But I got 'nough o' that soon—yes'm! The waves was monster tall. One seized me and the bale o' cotton, an' we shot right up to the crest of it. Then I found myself fallin' down on 'tother side, an' that cotton bale tumblin' after me. I had to get out o' the way of that bale in a hurry, or it might have swiped me a blow that I'd never come up from. An' I wasn't much of a swimmer."

The little girl's eyes were round with interest and her lips were parted. She drank in every word the old sailor uttered.

"Well, there I was, little miss," he said, still puffing on his pipe. "There was sev'ral of them cotton bales had been slid overboard about the same time, an' I found myself a-dodgin' of 'em. Fust one, then another, come after me—it seemed as if they was determined to git me.

"When I warn't lookin' for it, the end of one bale clumped me right in the back. I went down that time, I thought, for keeps.

"Down and down I went, till all I could see above me was green water streaked with white. I couldn't git my breath; but otherwise, mind ye, I wasn't in much trouble. I jest floated there, and I didn't much care to come up. I didn't care for anything.

"Lots o' things I'd done, good an' bad, chased through my head," went on Benjamin. "I remembered folks I hadn't thought of for years. My mother and father come to me—jest as plain! An' them dead for a long time."

"Oh! did you see *ghosts?*" Carolyn May exclaimed.

"Not to frighten me," the sailor assured her. "It was jest as though I was sittin' in a rockin'-chair, half asleep, an' these dreams come to me. I warn't in any pain. It was a lot worse when the boys reached me in the boat an' hauled me inboard.

"*Then,*" said the old man with vigour, "it cost me something. Comin' back from drowning is a whole lot worse than bein' drowned. You take it from me."

"Well," sighed Carolyn May, "I'm glad to know that. It's bothered me a good deal. If my mamma and papa had to be dead, maybe that was the nicest way for them to go.

"Only—only," confessed the little girl, "I'd feel *so* much better if they'd been brought back and we could have buried them behind the church, like Aunty Rose's babies and her spouse. And—and I'd feel better yet if they weren't dead at all!"

CHAPTER XIX

A GOOD DEAL OF EXCITEMENT

TIM, the hackman, had an accident to his load before he was ready to start from the camp after dinner. He was hauling maple and other hardwood logs to the turning mill at Sunrise Cove; and, the team he worked being a sturdy pair of animals, he piled a heavy cargo on the jumper. Just as he called to Carolyn May to hop upon the load for the ride home the horses started.

"Hey, you!" sang out the hack driver. "What d'ye think you're doin'? Hey, there! Whoa!"

Unguided, the horses brought the sled with a vicious crash against a snow-covered stump. The load rocked, one runner hoisted into the air, and the load toppled over completely. The log-chain could not stand such a strain, and right there and then occurred a notable overturn.

"Pitcher of George Washington!" bawled Tim. "Now look what you went and done!"

He declaimed this against the spirited team. The whole camp yelled its delight.

"You ain't fit to drive anything more lively than that old rackabones you tackle to your hack in sum-

mer, Tim," declared the boss of the camp. "You don't know nothing about managing a real horse."

"Hi, Timmy!" called another, "want somebody to hold their heads while ye build up that load again?"

But the hackman accepted this good-naturedly. He was delayed quite an hour, however, in starting from the camp with Carolyn May; and an hour out of a winter's afternoon is a good deal, for it becomes dark early at that time of year.

When Tim had his load perfectly secure again he tossed the sacks on the logs, and then lifted Carolyn May to the top. Prince whined and barked at her. Her eminence was too great for him to gain.

"Never mind, Princey," she called to him. "You'd rather run, you know you would. We're going home now."

The men in sight swung their caps and called their good-byes after her. Judy Mason flapped her apron from the cabin door. The sailor reached up to shake her mittened hand. This time the horses started properly, and, groaning, the heavily laden sled swung into the beaten track.

The sun was already down; a silver paring of moon hung above the tree tops, growing brighter each minute as the daylight faded. The stars would soon begin to sparkle in the heavens. The track led through the thick wood, which quickly hid the camp and all its busy scene from view.

Timothy had climbed to the top of the load, too,

and settled himself comfortably for the ride. He proceeded to fill and light his pipe.

"Aren't you ever scared that there might be bears or something in the woods, Mr. Timothy?" Carolyn May asked him, looking about in some trepidation. "Of course, with Prince here, I know that no wild animal could steal upon us. But when you're alone?"

Tim chuckled. "Bears don't pedestrianate around in winter—not as ever I heard on," he said. "They've got too much sense. Bears hole up when the snow flies. An', b'sides, they're ain't no bears. All done away with long ago."

"Are you sure?" Carolyn May asked anxiously.

"Sure as shootin'. Pitcher of George Washington! think I'd go traipsin' through these woods without no gun," Tim asked, grinning at her, "if there was anything fiercer'n a polecat to be met up with? An', come to think of it, *they* hole up in winter, too. Gid-ap, there, ye lazybones!"

The horses nodded their heads, as though agreeing with all he had said; the bells tinkled and the sled runners crunched over the snow. Prince did not feel so much like "cavorting," as Tim called it, and followed the sled at a sober gait. The woods were very silent. Not a bird winged its way across their path, and all the rabbits seemed to have hidden themselves. The little girl began to nod and her eyes blinked.

Suddenly, on the branch of a tree that overhung

the road they were following, Carolyn May saw a grey, furry body hugging close to the limb.

"Oh! what's that?" she gasped, scarcely loud enough for Tim to hear.

At one end of the grey body a round, catlike head was thrust out over the branch—the eyes yellow and glaring, the pointed ears erect.

"Oh, what a big cat!" Carolyn May cried, louder now. "See there!"

Tim, the hackman, turned in startled haste. At her cry the animal on the limb gathered its legs under it, arched its back, and uttered a startling screech.

"Oh, dear me!" murmured Carolyn May, "he's seen Prince."

This was probably the case, for the creature repeated its yowl, just like an enraged tomcat, only much louder than even old Jimmy could squall. Tim yelled to the horses and bent forward to lash them with the slack of the reins.

They leaped ahead, but not soon enough to carry the loaded sled out from under the limb. Prince, who had uttered a challenging growl, danced around the trunk of the tree. The huge cat leaped!

"Oh, my! Oh, my!" shrieked Carolyn May.

She did not realise the full danger of the situation. A mad lynx is no pleasant beast to meet; and this one, when it leaped, landed upon the rear of the load of logs.

"Pitcher of George Washington!" yelled Tim,

the hackman. "We're boarded by pirates, sure enough!"

The squalling, clawing brute tried to draw itself up on the logs. The horses were running now, and the jolting of the sled made the beast's hold precarious. Besides, just as the cat landed, Prince darted around to the rear of the sled. With a growl of rage, the big mongrel flung himself upward and managed to seize the lynx just at the root of its stubby tail.

Then there was a squalling time, indeed! The cat, clawing and spitting, sought to retain its hold on the logs, and yet strike at its adversary.

Prince had claws of his own, and he was scratching at the logs to gain a foothold; but his claws were not like the sabre-sharp nails of the lynx. A single thrust of a spread paw of the cat would have raked poor Prince's hide to shreds.

With the horses galloping and the lynx jouncing, half on and half off the logs, there was little likelihood of the wildcat's turning on its enemy. There was enough bull in Prince to clamp his jaws in an unbreakable hold, now that he had gripped the lynx.

Carolyn May was thoroughly frightened. She had to cling with both hands to save herself from being flung from the sled. Tim began to realise, at length, that he must do something besides yell at the horses.

"Pitcher of George Washington!" he gurgled.

"That blamed wood-pussy's gotter git off this load! I didn't come out here to give it a ride, I vum!"

He hung the reins on one of the sled stakes, seized a hickory club as thick as his forearm, and crept back towards the angry animal.

The dog's weight hanging to its tail was giving the lynx about all it could think of or take care of; yet it spat at Tim and struck at him with one paw.

"Would ye, ye nasty beast?" cried Tim, rising to his feet. "Scat!"

He struck at the head of the lynx with his club. That blow certainly would have done some execution had it landed where Tim intended it to land—on the creature's head. But, instead, the end of the club came down with great force on a log.

The blow had a tremendous effect, but not in the way Tim expected. The jar of the stroke almost paralysed the man's arm. He uttered a groan and staggered back. The sled runner went over a hummock just then on one side of the trail, while the runner on the other side sank into a rut. Like a diver from a springboard, Tim went head first, and backward, into a snowbank beside the road.

"Pitcher of George—" The rest of his favourite ejaculation was smothered by the snow, into which he plunged so deeply that only his felt boots, kicking heavenward, were to be seen.

Meanwhile, the sled lumbered on, although the reckless pace of the horses was reduced.

The peril to the little girl on the pile of logs in-

creased, however, as the pace of the horses decreased. She was quite helpless, save that she managed to retain her grasp on the log-chain. But there was nobody to protect her now from the furious beast that was making its best endeavour to crawl to the top of the logs.

If the lynx shook the mongrel loose it would attain its desire. Assured of a footing on the logs, there was no knowing what it might do in its rage. Carolyn May was in the gravest peril.

The child was too excited to cry out again. She clung with her mittened hands to the chain and gazed back at the snarling, spitting lynx with wide-open, terrified eyes.

Both beasts were scratching and tearing at the logs to obtain a foothold; the lynx was energetically trying to drag itself and the dog farther up on the logs, while Prince was striving to pull down his prey.

The dog seemed to know his little mistress was in danger. He was not going to let go. It was the lynx that finally gave in.

Squalling and clawing, its nails stripping long splinters from the maple logs, the cat fell back. When the two animals struck the hard snow, Prince was shaken off.

But the mongrel was brave. He dived in again and seized the lynx, this time by the throat. The cat got in a stroke with its hind paws. The lacerations along Prince's side were deep and painful, but he held to his prey.

Meantime, the horses plunged on, dragging the loaded sled over the rough road at a pace which still imperiled the little girl. Each moment she might be shaken from her hold and flung from the logs into the roadway.

Should she fall, it was not likely that she would escape harm, as had Tim, the hackman. He had now struggled out of the drift unhurt, and came staggering along the track, shouting in futile fashion for his team to stop.

Oddly enough, he had clung to the club all this time, and, reaching the bloody patch of snow where the dog and the lynx struggled, he set upon the big cat and beat it so about the head that it was very quickly dead.

"Come on! Come on!" Tim shouted to the dog. "You ain't got to stay here and growl at that critter no more. *Ketch them horses!*"

Prince actually seemed to know what Tim meant. Sore and bleeding as he was, the dog did not halt even to lick his wounds. He dashed ahead, barking, and quickly overtook the sled. The horses were not going very fast now, but they were not minded to halt, for all of Tim's shouting.

Prince sprang at the nigh horse and seized its bridle rein. The team swerved out of the path, Prince hanging on and growling.

The sled struck an obstruction and the team stopped.

"Pitcher of George Washington! if that ain't a

smart dog, I never see one," gasped Tim, panting and blowing. "Air ye hurt, Car'lyn May?"

"I—I guess not, Mr. Timothy," answered the little girl.

"I never seen the beat of this in all my born days," declared the man. "And that dog——"

"Prince is just the very *best* dog!" Carolyn May affirmed. "Oh, Mr. Timothy, take me down, quick! Poor Princey is all bloody; he must be hurt!"

"He is hurt some. That lynx raked him once, I 'low," returned Tim. "But he'll be all right when ye git him home and put something on the scratches. My goodness! what an exciting time! I never did see the beat of it!"

This statement Tim continued to repeat all the way to The Corners. He set Carolyn May back on the load again and hoisted Prince up with her, but he walked himself beside the team.

"Ain't goin' to take no more risks. Pitcher of George Washington! I guess not. Dunno what your Uncle Joe and Aunty Rose'll say to me."

The story lost nothing in the telling when Tim, the hackman, and Carolyn May both related it at the Stagg homestead. And poor Prince's wounds spoke louder than words.

"Ain't been a wildcat in this county afore in five year," declared Tim. "And I'm sartain sure there never was one here more savage."

When Uncle Joe saw Tim in the village and heard about the adventure he hastened home to make sure

that his little niece had received no injury. Prince was enthroned on an old quilt beside the range.

Aunty Rose had herself washed his wounds—though she admitted being afraid of his savage-looking teeth—and had put some healing balsam on them. The dog, evidently enjoying his rôle of invalid, looked up at Mr. Stagg and slapped his tail on the floor.

"If it hadn't been for that dumb creature, Joseph Stagg," said Aunty Rose, still quite shaken over the incident, "we wouldn't maybe have our little girl unhurt. If Timothy tells the truth——"

"I guess he tells the truth, all right," snorted Mr. Stagg. "He don't know enough to tell anything but truth. Howsomever, if he'd stopped his team, he could have licked that old lynx to a fare-ye-well. I wouldn't trust Hannah's Car'lyn with him again—not even to go to church."

"Why, Uncle Joe," said Carolyn May, "you can't really blame Mr. Timothy for being scared at that awful wildcat. I was scared myself."

CHAPTER XX

THE SPRING FRESHET

SINCE Joseph Stagg had listened to the rambling tale of the sailor regarding the sinking of the *Dunraven,* he had borne the fate of his sister and her husband much in mind.

He had come no nearer to deciding what to do with the apartment in New York and its furnishings. Carolyn May had prattled so much about her home that Mr. Stagg felt as though he knew each room and each piece of furniture. And, should he go down to New York and make arrangements to have his sister's possessions taken to an auction room, he would feel on entering the flat as though the ghosts of Carolyn May's parents would meet him there.

Mr. Price had written him twice about the place. The second time he had found a tenant willing to sublet the furnished apartment. It would have made a little income for Carolyn May, but Mr. Stagg could not bring himself to sign the lease. The lawyer had not written since.

After listening to Benjamin Hardy's story, the hardware dealer felt less inclined than before to close up the affairs of Carolyn May's small " estate."

Not that he for one moment believed that there was a possibility of Hannah and her husband being alive. Five months had passed. In these days of wireless telegraph and fast sea traffic such a thing could not be possible. The imagination of the practical hardware merchant could not visualise it.

Had the purser's boat, in which the old sailor declared the Camerons were, been picked up by one of the Turkish ships, as the other refugees from the *Dunraven* had been rescued by the French vessel, surely news of the fact would long since have reached the papers, even had circumstances kept Mr. and Mrs. Cameron from returning home.

The Mediterranean is not the South Seas. A steam vessel could reach New York from the spot where the *Dunraven* had sunk in a week.

No, Mr. Stagg held no shred of belief that Hannah and her husband were not drowned.

Carolyn May did not speak of the tragedy; yet it was continually in the child's mind. Her conversation with the sailor regarding the sufferings of drowning people only touched a single phase of the little girl's trouble.

She was glad to be assured that her parents had not lingered in agony when they met their fate. She accepted the sailor's statement regarding drowning quite at its par value. Nevertheless, neither this interview with Benjamin Hardy at the lumber camp nor Aunty Rose's copious doses of boneset tea cheered the little girl. The excitement of the adven-

ture with the lynx lasted only a few hours. Then the cloud returned to Carolyn May's countenance and she drooped once more.

Miss Minnie noticed it. By this time the sharp-eyed young teacher looked through her spectacles very kindly at the little girl.

"What is the trouble with you, Carolyn May?" the teacher asked on one occasion. "You used to be the happiest little girl in The Corners school; and you were brightening up everybody else, too. I don't like to see you so glum and thoughtful. It isn't like you. What about your '*look up*' motto, my dear? Have you forgotten it?"

"I haven't forgotten that—oh, no, Miss Minnie. I *couldn't* forget that!" the child replied. "I spect my papa would be 'shamed of me for losing heart so. But, oh, Miss Minnie! I *do* get such an empty feeling now when I think of my papa and mamma. And I think of them 'most all the time. It just does seem as though they were going farther and farther away from me ev'ry day!"

Miss Minnie took the child in her arms and kissed her.

"Faithful little soul!" she murmured. "Time will never heal heart wounds for her."

Miss Amanda understood Carolyn May, too. When the child went to the Parlow house she found sympathy and comfort in abundance.

Not that Aunty Rose and Uncle Joe were not sympathetic; but they did not wholly understand the

child's nature. As the winter passed and Carolyn May grew more and more quiet, the hardware dealer and the woman who kept house for him decided that there was nothing the matter with Carolyn May save the natural changes incident to her growing up. For, physically, she was growing fast. As Aunty Rose said to Mr. Stagg, she was "stretching right out of her clothes."

But Carolyn May did not always keep out of mischief, for she was a very human little girl, after all was said and done. Especially was she prone to escapades when she was in the company of Freda Payne, her black-eyed school chum.

Trouble seemed to gravitate towards Freda. Not that she was intentionally naughty, but she was too active and too full of curiosity to lead a very placid existence. Wherever Freda was the storm clouds of trouble soon gathered.

Carolyn May and Freda were playing one Saturday afternoon in the long shed that connected the blacksmith shop with Mr. Lardner's house, and Amos Bartlett was with them.

Carolyn May did not often play with little boys. She did not much approve of them. They often played roughly and it must be confessed that their hands almost always were grubby. But she rather pitied Amos Bartlett because he had been endowed with a nose so generous that the other children laughed at him and called him "Nosey." He snuffled, and he talked nasally, which made Carolyn

May shudder sometimes, but she was brave about it when in Amos' company.

The three were playing in Mr. Hiram Lardner's shed, which was half storeroom and half workshop. Back in a corner the inquisitive Freda found a great cask filled with something very yellow and foamy and delicious to look at.

"Oh, molasses, I do believe!" exclaimed Freda eagerly. "Don't you s'pose it's molasses, Car'lyn May? I just love molasses!"

Carolyn May was fond of syrup, too; and this barrelful certainly looked like the kind Aunty Rose sometimes put on the table for the griddle cakes. The little girl liked it better than she did maple syrup.

"I believe it is molasses," she agreed.

"Here's a tin cup to drink it with," put in Amos.

"O-oh! Would you dare taste it, Car'lyn May?" cried Freda.

"No. I'd rather not. Besides, it isn't ours," Carolyn May returned virtuously.

"But there's so much of it," urged Freda. "I'm sure Mr. Lardner wouldn't care—nor Mrs. Lardner, either."

"But—but maybe it isn't molasses," Carolyn May suggested.

"I bet it is m'lasses," declared Amos with a longing look.

"You try it, Amos," ordered Freda, handing him the cup.

"Yes," said Carolyn May coolly. "You're a boy, and boys don't mind messing into things. Just taste it, Amos."

"Go on, Amos," added Freda. "I dare you. I double-double dare you!"

Of course, Amos, boylike, could not take a dare, so he dipped the tin cup into the yellow, foamy mass and took a good big swallow. Then the trouble began.

He dropped the cup into the barrel, where it immediately disappeared from sight, while Amos hopped about, sputtering, coughing, crying, and generally acting like a boy distracted.

"Oh, I'm pizened! I'm pizened!" he bawled. "And you girls done it! I'm—I'm goin' to tell my mother!"

His shrieks brought Mrs. Lardner from her kitchen.

"What under the sun are you children up to?" she demanded. "Amos Bartlett, behave yourself! What *is* it?"

Amos could not tell her. All he could shriek was that he was "pizened."

He burst out of the shed, ran through the shop, and so home to his mother. Carolyn May was too frightened to speak, but Freda said shakingly:

"We only got him to taste the molasses."

"What molasses?" demanded the blacksmith's wife, startled.

"Why—why—*that,*" said Freda, pointing.

"My mercy me!" gasped the woman. "That soft soap that Hiram just made for me? I don't know but the boy *is* poisoned."

Mrs. Lardner rushed after Amos, to see if she could help his mother. Carolyn May and Freda crept quietly home, two frightened little girls.

But Amos was not poisoned. The doctor brought him around all right. Freda suffered an old-fashioned spanking for her part in the performance; but Aunty Rose, who did not believe in corporal punishment, did not at first know what to do to Carolyn May.

"She should be punished, Joseph Stagg," the housekeeper said to the hardware dealer. "I've put her to bed early——"

"Not without her supper?" he asked in alarm, dropping his own knife and fork.

"No-o," she admitted. "I couldn't do that."

Mr. Stagg chuckled. "I reckon children are children," he observed. "I don't know as Hannah's Car'lyn is any different from the rest."

"I know one thing, Joseph Stagg," said Aunty Rose severely. "If you ever have children of your own they will be utterly spoiled."

But Mr. Stagg still seemed amused.

"If you had anything to do with 'em, I'd have plenty of help in spoiling 'em, Aunty Rose," he declared.

Carolyn May took the matter somewhat seriously. She tried to make it up to Amos Bartlett by lending

him her sled, giving him candy when she had it, and otherwise petting him.

"For he *might* have been poisoned," she stated; "and then he'd be dead, and would *never* grow up to fit his nose."

Carolyn May's acquaintance broadened constantly. She made friends wherever she went, and the wintry weather did not often keep her in the house. Uncle Joe would not hear of her going into the woods again, unless he was with her, but she could go where she pleased among the neighbours.

At Sunrise Cove there were many people who loved Carolyn May Cameron. Her most faithful knight, however, was homely, optimistic Chetwood Gormley. Mr. Stagg declared that when Chet saw "Hannah's Car'lyn" approaching he "grinned so wide that he was like to swallow his own ears."

And they would have been a mouthful. Even Mrs. Gormley, who could see few faults in her son, declared that Chet "wasn't behind the door when ears were given out."

"Chet's got a generous nature," the good woman said to Carolyn May one day when the latter was making the seamstress a little visit. "It don't take his ears to show that, though they *do*. He'd do anything for a friend. But I don't know as he's 'preciated as much as he'd oughter be," sighed Mrs. Gormley. "Mr. Stagg, even, don't know Chet's good parts."

"Oh, yes, Mrs. Gormley, I think Uncle Joe knows

all about Chet's ears. He couldn't hardly miss 'em," the little girl hastened to observe.

"Humph! I didn't mean actual parts of his body," Mrs. Gormley replied, eyeing the little girl over her spectacles. "I mean character. He's a fine boy, Car'lyn May."

"Oh! I think he is, too," agreed the child. "And I'm sure Uncle Joe 'preciates him."

"Well, I hope so," sighed the seamstress. "You can't much tell just what Mr. Joe Stagg thinks of folks. There's him and Mandy Parlow. Somebody was tellin' me Mr. Stagg was seen comin' out o' the Parlow house one day. But, shucks! *that* ain't so, of course?" and she looked narrowly at her little visitor.

"Oh, I wish he *would* make up with Miss Amanda," sighed Carolyn May. "She's *so* nice."

"And I guess he thought so, too—once. But you can't tell, as I say. Mr. Joe Stagg is a man that never lets on what's in his mind."

Just then in burst Chet, quite unexpectedly, for it was not yet mid-afternoon.

"Oh, dear me! Mercy me!" gasped Mrs. Gormley. "What *is* the matter, Chetwood? Mr. Stagg hain't let you go, has he?"

"Let me go? Well, there, mother, I wish you warn't always expectin' trouble," Chet said, though smiling widely. "Why should Mr. Stagg discharge me? Why, I'm gettin' more and more valuable to him ev'ry day—sure I am!"

"He—he ain't said nothin' yet about—about a partnership, has he, Chetwood?" his mother whispered hoarsely.

"My goodness, maw—no! You know that'll take time. But it's almost sure to come. I seen him out the other day, across the street, looking up at the sign. And I'll bet I know what was in his mind, maw."

"I hope so," sighed the seamstress. "But you ain't told us how you come to be away from the store at this hour."

"That's 'cause of Car'lyn May," responded Chet, smiling at the little girl. "He let me off to take her slidin'. The ice ain't goin' to be safe in the cove for long now. Spring's in the air a'ready. Both brooks are runnin' full."

"Oh, Chet! *Can* we go sliding?" cried Carolyn May. "I brought my sled!"

"Sure. Your uncle says he knowed you wanted to go down on the ice. I'll put on my skates and draw you. We'll have such fun!"

Carolyn May was delighted. Although the sky was overcast and a storm threatening when they got down on the ice, neither the boy nor the little girl gave the weather a second thought. Nor had Mr. Stagg considered the weather when he had allowed Chet to leave the store that afternoon. He was glad to get Chet out of the way for an hour; for, if the truth be told, he sometimes found it difficult to make any use of young Gormley at all.

"I might as well lock up the store when I go home to dinner and supper," Mr. Stagg sometimes observed to himself. "If the critter sells anything, it's usually at the wrong price. He wants to sell wire nails by the dozen and brass hinges by the pound. I dunno what I keep him for, unless it's for the good of my soul. Chet Gormley does help a feller to cultivate patience!"

Fortunately, for the peace of mind of Chet and his widowed mother, they did not suspect the hardware dealer of holding this opinion. Just now the boy was delighted to lend himself to Carolyn May's pleasure. He strapped on his skates, and then settled the little girl firmly on her sled. She sat forward, and he lifted Prince up behind her, where the dog sat quite securely, with his forepaws over his mistress' shoulders, his jaws agape, and his tongue hanging out like a moist, red necktie.

"He's laughin'—just as broad as he can laugh, Car'lyn May," chuckled Chet. "All ready, now?"

"Oh, we're all right, Chet," the little girl cried gaily.

The boy harnessed himself with the long tow-rope and skated away from the shore, dragging the sled after him at a brisk pace. Chet was a fine skater, and although the surface of the ice was rather spongy he had no difficulty in making good time towards the mouth of the cove.

"Oh, my!" squealed Carolyn May, "there isn't anybody else on the ice."

"We won't run into nobody, then," laughed the boy.

There were schooners and barges and several steam craft tied up at the docks. These had been frozen in all winter. They would soon be free, and lake traffic would begin again.

It was too misty outside the cove to see the open water; but it was there, and Chet knew it as well as anybody. He had no intention of taking any risks—especially with Carolyn May in his charge.

The wind blew out of the cove, too. As they drew away from the shelter of the land they felt its strength. It was not a frosty wind. Indeed, the temperature was rising rapidly, and, as Chet had said, there was a hint of spring in the air.

Naturally, neither the boy nor the little girl—and surely not the dog—looked back towards the land. Otherwise, they would have seen the snow flurry that swept down over the town and quickly hid it from the cove.

Chet was skating his very swiftest. Carolyn May was screaming with delight. Prince barked joyfully. And, suddenly, in a startling fashion, they came to a fissure in the ice!

The boy darted to one side, heeled on his right skate, and stopped. He had jerked the sled aside, too, yelling to Carolyn May to "hold fast!" But Prince was flung from it, and scrambled over the ice, barking loudly.

"Oh, dear me!" cried Carolyn May. "You

stopped too quick, Chet Gormley. Goodness! There's a hole in the ice!"

"And I didn't see it till we was almost in it," acknowledged Chet. "It's more'n a hole. Why! there's a great field of ice broke off and sailin' out into the lake."

"Oh, my!" gasped the little girl, awed, "isn't that great, Chet?"

"It's great that we didn't get caught on it," muttered Chet, deeply impressed by the peril.

"We can't go any farther, can we?" she asked.

"Nope. Got to turn back. Why, hullo! it's snowin'!"

"Dear me! and we didn't bring any umbrella," observed Carolyn May.

"You call Prince. I guess we'd better get back," Chet said more seriously. "We're three miles from town, if we're an inch."

"And we can't see the town or the boats or the docks! Oh, Chet! isn't this *fun?* I never was out in a snowstorm on the ice before."

The snow was damp and clung to their clothing. Chet saw that it was going to clog his skates, too. He would not let the child see that he was worried; but the situation was no ordinary one.

In the first place, it was hard to tell the points of the compass in the snowstorm. Prince might be able to smell his way back to land; but Chet Gormley was not endowed with the same sense of smell that Prince possessed.

The boy knew at once that he must be careful in making his way home with the little girl. Having seen one great fissure in the ice, he might come upon another. It seemed to him as though the ice under his feet was in motion. In the distance was the sound of a reverberating crash that could mean but one thing. *The ice in the cove was breaking up!*

The waters of the two brooks were pouring down into the cove. This swelling flood lifted the great sheet of spongy ice and set it in motion. Everywhere at the head of the cove the ice was cracking and breaking up. The wind helped. Spring had really come, and the annual freshet was likely now to force the ice entirely out of the cove and open the way for traffic in a few hours.

CHAPTER XXI

THE CHAPEL BELL

IF Joseph Stagg had obeyed the precept of his little niece on this particular afternoon and had been "looking up," instead of having his nose in the big ledger, making out monthly statements, he might have discovered the coming storm in season to withdraw his permission to Chet to take Carolyn May out on the ice.

It was always dark enough in the little back office in winter for the hardware dealer to have a lamp burning. So he did not notice the snow flurry that had taken Sunrise Cove in its arms until he chanced to walk out to the front of the store for needed exercise.

"I declare to man, it's snowing!" muttered Joseph Stagg. "Thought we'd got through with that for this season."

He opened the store door. There was a chill, clammy wind, and the snow was damp and packed quickly under foot. The street was already well covered, and the snow stuck to the awning frames and the fronts of the buildings across the way.

"Hum! If that Chet Gormley were here now, he might be of some use for once," thought Mr. Stagg.

"But, of course, he never *is* here when I want him. He could clean this walk before folks get all balled up walking on it."

Suddenly he bethought him of the errand that had taken the boy away from the store. Not at once was the hardware merchant startled by the thought; but he cast a critical glance skyward, trying to measure the downfall of snow.

"He'll be coming back—with Hannah's Car'lyn. Of course, he isn't rattle-brained enough to take her out on the ice when it's snowing like this."

"Hey, Stagg!" shouted a shopkeeper from over the way, who had likewise come to the door, "did you hear that?"

"Hear what?" asked Joseph Stagg, puzzled.

"There she goes again! That's ice, old man. She's breaking up. We'll have spring with us in no time now. I told Scofield this morning he could begin to load that schooner of his. The ice is going out of the cove."

The reverberating crash that had startled Chet Gormley had startled Joseph Stagg as well.

"My goodness!" gasped the hardware dealer, and he started instantly away from the store, bareheaded as he was, without locking the door behind him—something he had never done before, since he had established himself in business on the main street of Sunrise Cove.

Just why he ran he could scarcely have explained. Of course, the children had not gone out in this snow-

storm! Mrs. Gormley—little sense as he believed the seamstress possessed—would not have allowed them to venture.

Yet, why had Chet not returned? Mr. Stagg knew very well that the ungainly boy was no shirk. Having been sent home for the particular purpose of taking Carolyn May out on her sled, he would have done that, or returned immediately to the store. Although prone to find fault with Chet Gormley, the hardware dealer recognised his good qualities as certainly as anybody did.

He quickened his pace. He was running—slipping and sliding over the wet snow—when he turned into the street on which his store boy and his widowed mother lived.

The cottage was a little, boxlike place, and one had to climb steps to get to it. Mrs. Gormley saw him coming from the windows of the tiny front room which served her as parlour and workroom combined. The seamstress tottered to the door and opened it wide, clinging to it for support.

"Oh, oh, Mr. Stagg! What's happened now?" she gasped. "I hope poor Chet ain't done nothin' that he shouldn't ha' done. I'm sure he tries to do his very best. If he's done anything——"

"Where *is* he?" Joseph Stagg managed to say.

"Where—where is he?" repeated the widow. "Oh, do come in, Mr. Stagg. It's snowin', ain't it?"

Mr. Stagg plunged into the little house, head down, and belligerent.

"Where's that plagued boy?" he demanded again. "Don't tell me he's taken Hannah's Car'lyn out on the cove in this storm!"

"But—but you *told* him he could!" wailed the widow.

"What if I did? I didn't know 'twas going to snow like this, did I?"

"But it wasn't snowin' when they went," said Mrs. Gormley, plucking up some little spirit. "I'm sure it wasn't Chetwood's fault. Oh, dear!"

"Woman," groaned Joseph Stagg, "it doesn't matter whose fault it is—or if it's anybody's fault. The mischief's done. The ice is breaking up. It's drifting out of the inlet. You can hear it—if you'd stop talking long enough." This was rather unfair on Mr. Stagg's part, for he was certainly doing more talking than anybody else.

Just at this moment an unexpected voice broke into the discussion. There was a second woman—she had been sitting by the window—in Mrs. Gormley's front room.

"Are you positive they went out on the cove to slide, Mrs. Gormley?"

"Oh, yes, I be, Mandy," answered the seamstress. "Chet said he was goin' there, and what Chet says he'll do, he always does."

"Then the ice has broken away and they have been carried out into the lake," groaned Mr. Stagg.

Mandy Parlow came quickly to the little hall.

"Perhaps not, Joseph," she said, speaking directly

to the hardware dealer. "It may be the storm. It snows so fast they would easily get turned around—be unable to find the shore."

Another reverberating crash echoed from the cove. Mrs. Gormley wrung her hands.

"Oh, my Chet! Oh, my Chet!" she wailed. "He'll be drowned!"

"He won't be, if he's got any sense," snapped Mr. Stagg. "I'll get some men and we'll go after them."

"Call the dog, Joseph Stagg. Call the dog," advised Miss Amanda.

"Heh? Didn't Prince go with 'em?"

"Oh, yes, he did," wailed Mrs. Gormley.

"Call the dog, just the same," repeated Amanda Parlow. "Prince will hear you and bark."

"God bless you! So he will," cried Mr. Stagg. "You've got more sense than any of us, Mandy."

"And I'll have the chapel bell rung," she said.

"Huh! what's that for?"

"The wind will carry the sound out across the cove. That boy, Chet, will recognise the sound of the bell and it will give him an idea of where home is."

"You do beat all!" exclaimed Joseph Stagg, starting to leave the house.

But Amanda stayed him for a moment.

"Find a cap of Chet's, Mrs. Gormley," she commanded. "Don't you see Mr. Stagg has no hat? He'll catch his death of cold."

"Why, I never thought!" He turned to speak directly to Miss Amanda, but she had gone back into the room and was putting on her outer wraps. Mrs. Gormley, red-eyed and weeping, brought the cap.

"Don't—don't be too hard on poor Chet, sir," she sobbed. "He ain't to blame."

"Of course he isn't," admitted the hardware dealer heartily. "And I'm sure he'll look out for Hannah's Car'lyn—he and the dog."

He plunged down the steps and kept on down the hill to the waterfront. There was an eating-place here where the waterside characters congregated, and Mr. Stagg put his head in at the door.

"Some of you fellers come out with me on the ice and look for a little girl—and a boy and a dog," said Mr. Stagg. "Like enough, they're lost in this storm. And the ice is going out."

"I seen 'em when they went down," said one man, jumping up with alacrity. "Haven't they come back yet?"

"No."

"Snow come down and blinded 'em," said another.

"Do you reckon the spring freshet's re'lly due yet?" propounded a third man.

"Don't matter whether she be or not, Right-child," growled one of the other men. "The kids ought to be home, 'stead o' out on that punky ice."

They all rushed out of the eating-house and down to the nearest dock. Even the cook went, for he chanced to know Carolyn May.

"And let me tell you, she's one rare little kid," he declared, out of Mr. Stagg's hearing. "How she come to be related to that hard-as-nails Joe Stagg is a puzzler."

The hardware dealer might deserve this title in ordinary times, but this was one occasion when he plainly displayed emotion.

Hannah's Car'lyn, the little child he had learned to love, was somewhere on the ice in the driving storm. He would have rushed blindly out on the rotten ice, barehanded and alone, had the others not halted him.

"Hold on! We want a peevy or two—them's the best tools," said one of the men.

"And a couple of lanterns," said another.

Joseph Stagg stood on the dock and shouted at the top of his voice:

"Prince! Prince! Prince!"

The wind must have carried his voice a long way out across the cove, but there was no reply.

Then, suddenly, the clear silver tone of a bell rang out. Its pitch carried through the storm startlingly clear.

"Hullo! what's the chapel bell tolling for?" demanded the man who had suggested the lanterns.

"The boy will hear that!" cried another. "If he isn't an idiot, he'll follow the sound of the chapel bell."

"Ya-as," said the cook, "if the ice ain't opened up 'twixt him an' the shore."

There was a movement out in the cove. One field of ice crashed against another. Mr. Stagg stifled a moan and was one of the first to climb down to the level of the ice.

"Have a care, Joe," somebody warned him. "This snow on the ice will mask the holes and fissures something scandalous."

But Joseph Stagg was reckless of his own safety. He started out into the snow, shouting again:

"Prince! Prince! Here, boy! Here, boy!"

There was no answering bark. The ice cracked and shuddered and the gale slapped the snow against the searchers more fiercely than before. Had they been facing the wind, the snow would fairly have blinded them.

"And that's what's happened to the boy," declared one of the men. "Don't you see? He's got to face it to get back to town."

"Then he is drifted with it," said Mr. Stagg hopelessly.

"Say, he'll know which is the right way! Hear that bell?" rejoined another. "You can hear the chapel bell when you're beating into the cove with the wind dead against you. I know, for I've been there."

"Me, too," agreed another.

The clanging of the chapel bell was a comforting sound. Joseph Stagg did not know that, unable to find the sexton, Amanda Parlow had forced the church door and was tugging at the rough rope herself.

Back and forth she rang the iron clapper, and it was no uncertain note that clanged across the storm-driven cove that afternoon. It was not work to which Carolyn May's " pretty lady " was used. Her shoulders soon ached and the palms of her hands were raw and bleeding. But she continued to toll the bell without a moment's surcease.

She did not know how much that resonant sound might mean to those out on the ice—to the little girl and the boy who might have no other means of locating the shore, to the men who were searching for the lost ones; for they, too, might be lost in the storm.

The axle of the old bell groaned and shrieked at each revolution. Miss Amanda pulled on the rope desperately. She did not think to put her foot in the loop of the rope to aid her in this work. With the power of her arms and shoulders alone she brought the music from the throat of the bell. Every stroke was a shock that racked her body terribly. She dared not leave the rope for a minute while she called from the door for help.

She hoped the sexton would come, wondering who was so steadily pulling the bell rope. Stroke followed stroke. The axle shrieked—and she could have done the same with pain had she not set her teeth in her lip and put forth every atom of will power she possessed to keep to the work and stifle her agony.

On and on, till her brain swam, and her breath

came chokingly from her lungs. Once she missed the stroke, her strength seeming to desert her for the moment. Frantically she clawed at the rope again and pulled down on it with renewed desperation.

"I will! I will!" she gasped.

Why? For the sake of the little child that she, too, had learned to love?

Perhaps. And, yet, it was not the flowerlike face of little Carolyn May that Amanda Parlow saw continually before her eyes as she tugged on the bell rope with bleeding hands.

Going out into the storm, out on the treacherous ice, was a figure that she had watched during the long years from behind the curtains of her front room. It was the most familiar figure in the world to her.

She had seen it change from a youthful, willowy shape to a solid, substantial, middle-aged figure during these years. She had seen it aging before its time. No wonder she could visualise it now so plainly out there on the ice.

"Joe! Joe!" she muttered each time that she bore down on the bell rope, and the iron tongue shouted the word for her, far across the snow-blotted cove.

CHAPTER XXII

CHET GORMLEY'S AMBITION

CAROLYN MAY was not the first of the trio caught out on the moving ice to be frightened. Perhaps because she had such unbounded faith in the good intentions of everybody towards her, the child could not imagine anything really hurting her.

That is, excepting wildcats. Carolyn May was pretty well convinced that they did not like little girls.

"Oh, isn't this fun!" she crowed, bending her head before the beating of the storm. "Do hang on, Princey."

But Prince could not hang on so well, now that they faced the wind. He slipped off the sled twice, and that delayed them. Under his skates, Chet could feel the ice heave, while the resonant cracks followed each other like a file-fire of musketry.

"Goodness me!" gasped Carolyn May, "the ice seems to be going all to pieces, Chet. I hope it won't till we get back to the shore."

"I'm hopin' that, too," returned the boy.

He had quickly realised that they were in peril,

but he would not let Carolyn May see that he was frightened—no, indeed! But he had to give up trying to make Prince sit on the sled.

"He'll just have to run. He can do it in this snow," said Chet. "I declare! he can get along better than I can. I guess I'd better take off my skates."

"I'll hold 'em for you, Chet," Carolyn May cried, laughing. "My! doesn't this snow slap you hard?"

The boy unstrapped the skates swiftly. He had a very good reason for removing them. If the ice was breaking up into floes, he might skate right off into the water, being unable to halt quickly enough, if on the steel runners.

He now plodded on, head down, dragging the sled and the child, with Prince slipping and scratching along beside them.

Suddenly he came to open water. It was so broad a channel that he could not hope to leap it; and, of course, he could not get the sled and the little girl across.

"My!" cried Carolyn May, "that place wasn't here when we came out, was it, Chet? It must have just come here."

"I don't think it was here before," admitted the boy.

"Or maybe you're not going back the way you came?" suggested the little girl. "Are you sure you're going the right way home?"

Chet really was doubtful of his direction. He

believed that the wind was blowing directly down the cove, but it might have shifted. The thickly falling snow blinded and confused him.

Suddenly a sound reached their ears that startled both; it even made Prince prick up his ears and listen. Then the dog sat up on his haunches and began to howl.

"Oh, *don't,* Prince!" gasped Carolyn May. "Who ever told you you could sing, just because you hear a church bell ringing?"

"That's the chapel bell!" cried Chet Gormley. "Now I'm sure I'm right. But we must get around this open patch of water."

He set off along the edge of the open water, which looked black and angry. The ice groaned and cracked in a threatening way. He was not sure whether the floe they were on had completely broken away from the great mass of ice in the cove and was already drifting out into the lake or not.

Haste, however, he knew was imperative. The tolling of the chapel bell coming faintly down the wind, Chet drew the sled swiftly along the edge of the opening, the dog trotting along beside them, whining. Prince plainly did not approve of this.

"Here it is!" shouted the boy in sudden joy. "Now we'll be all right, Car'lyn May!"

"Oh, I'm so glad, Chet," said the little girl. "For I'm getting real cold, and this snow makes me all wet."

Chet was tempted to take off his coat and put it

about her. But the coat was thin, and he felt that it was already soaked through. It would not do her any material good.

"Keep up your heart, Car'lyn May," he begged. "I guess we'll get through all right now."

"Oh, I'm not really afraid," the little girl answered. "Only I'd really like to be on shore."

Chet would have liked to be on shore at that very moment himself. He swiftly drew the sled around the upper end of the open piece of water. The ice was "bucking" under his feet, and scarcely had they got away from the water when the crack extended clear across the cove and the floe drifted away.

"Hurrah!" shouted the boy, his courage rising again. "We're well rid of that old place."

"Oh, isn't it good that we got away from there?" Carolyn May remarked. "Why! we might have drifted right out into the middle of the lake and been home too late for supper."

Chet had no rejoinder to make to this. He realised that the entire surface of the cove ice was breaking up. Again and again the shattering sounds announced the splitting of the ice floes. He hastened on towards the sound of the tolling bell, sharply on the watch for other breaks in the ice.

Here was another—a wide-spreading crevasse filled with black water. Chet had no idea to which direction he should turn. And, indeed, it seemed to him as though the opening was growing wider each moment. The ice on which they stood must

be completely severed from that further up in the inlet!

The boy had become frightened. Carolyn May had little idea of their danger. Prince sat up and howled. It seemed to the boy as though they were in desperate straits, indeed.

"You've got to be a brave girl, Car'lyn May," he said. "I'm goin' to swim across this place and then drag you over. You stick to the sled and you won't scarcely get wet even."

"Oh, Chet! but *you'll* get wet!" she cried. "And your mother'll punish you, Chet Gormley!"

"Oh, no, she won't," replied the boy, with a hysterical laugh. "Don't you fear. Now, sit right still."

He had untied one end of the sled rope and looped it around his wrist. The open water was not more than eight feet across. He knew it was going to be an exceedingly cold plunge, but he saw no other way of overcoming the difficulty.

Prince began to bark madly when the boy sat down and thrust his legs into the black water. The chill of it almost took Chet's breath away when he finally slid down, shoulder deep, into the flood.

"Oh, Chet! don't you *dare* get drownd-ed!" begged Carolyn May, terrified now by the situation.

He turned a bright face on her as he struck out for the edge of the other ice floe. Chet might not have been the wisest boy who ever lived, but he was brave, in the very best sense of the word.

"Don't worry about me, Car'lyn May," he chattered.

The desperate chill of the water almost stopped the boy's heart. The shock of this plunge into the icy depths was sufficient to kill a weak person. But Chet Gormley had plenty of reserve strength, whether he was noted for good sense or not.

Almost anybody in his situation would have remained on the ice and hoped for help from shore; but it never entered Chet's mind that he could expect anybody else to save Carolyn May but himself. She was in his care, and Chet believed it was up to him to get her safely ashore, and that in as quick time as possible.

Three strokes took him across the patch of open water. He hooked his arms over the edge of the ice to his elbows, took breath for a moment, and then dragged his long frame up on the bobbing, uncertain field.

It was a mighty struggle. Chet's saturated garments and his boots filled with water weighed him down like lead. But he accomplished it at last. He was safely on the ice. He glanced back over his shoulder and saw the child on the sled in the snowstorm and the dog beside her.

"We'll be all right in a minute, Car'lyn May!" he called, climbing to his feet.

And then he discovered something that almost stunned him. The line he had looped around his wrist had slipped off! He had no way of reaching

the rope attached to the sled save by crossing back through the water.

Chet felt that he could not do it.

"Oh, Chet! Chet!" wailed Carolyn May, "you've dropped my rope!"

The end of it hung in the water. The child, of course, could not throw it across to him. The boy was stricken dumb and motionless. That is, he was motionless, save for the trembling of his limbs and the chattering of his teeth. The chill of the water had struck through, it seemed, to the very marrow of his bones.

What he should do, poor Chet could not think. His brain seemed completely clouded. And he was so cold and helpless that there was not much he could do, anyway.

His clothing was stiffening on his frame. The snow beat against his back, and he could scarcely stand. The space was growing wider between the edge of the ice where he stood and that edge where Carolyn May and the dog were.

But what was the little girl doing? He saw her hauling in on the wet rope, and she seemed to be speaking to Prince, for he stood directly before her, his ears erect, his tail agitated. By-and-by he barked sharply.

"*Now,* Princey!" Chet heard her cry.

She thrust the end of the rope into the dog's jaws and waved her mittened hand towards the open water and the unhappy Chet beyond it.

Prince sprang around, faced the strait of black water, shaking the end of the rope vigorously. Chet saw what she meant, and he shrieked to the dog:

"Come on, Prince! Come on, good dog! Here, sir!"

Prince could not bark his reply with the rope in his jaws, but he sprang into the water, and swam sturdily towards Chet.

"Come on, you good dog!" yelled Chet, half-crying and half-laughing. "You have the pep, you have, Princey! Come on!"

He stooped and seized the dog's forelegs when he came near and helped him scramble out on the ice. The end of the rope was safely in his grasp again.

"My goodness! My goodness! I could sing a hallelujah!" declared Chet, his eyes streaming now. "Hold on, now, Car'lyn May! I'm goin' to drag you across. You hang right on to that sled."

"Oh, I'll cling to it, Chet," declared the little girl. "And do take me off this ice, quick, for I think it's floating out with me."

Chet drew on the rope, the sled moved forward and plunged, with just a little splash, into the pool. Prince barked desperately as his little mistress screamed.

"Oh, I'm getting wet, Chet!" she shrieked.

"Hold hard!" yelled Chet in return. "You won't get very wet."

In a few seconds he had "snaked" the sled to

the edge of the ice floe on which he stood. He picked the sobbing Carolyn May off the sled and then lifted that up, too. The little girl was wet below her waist.

"I'm—I'm just as co-cold as I—I can be," she chattered. "Oh, Chet! take me home please!"

"I'm a-going to," chattered the lad in return.

He dragged off his coat now, wrung it as dry as he could, and wrapped it around Carolyn May's legs before he seated her on the sled again. Then he seized the rope once more and started towards the sound of the chapel bell.

How glad he was that the bell still sounded! He was sure of that—and it was the only thing he was sure of.

He could only stagger on, now, for his feet were very heavy, and he felt as though he should fall at any moment. And if he did fall he was quite sure he would not be able to get up again.

Chet knew he could not face Mr. Stagg if anything really bad happened to "Hannah's Car'lyn." All his hopes of advancement and ultimate success would be swept away, too, if this adventure ended in tragedy.

Foolish as perhaps the boy's longings and hopes were, the mark he had set himself to gain was very real, indeed, to Chet Gormley. He hoped some day to see that sign, "Stagg & Gormley," over the hardware store door. If for no other reason than that, he would not give up now.

The chapel bell tolled on. The sleet beat in his

face stingingly. He panted and staggered, but persevered.

"I'll show him," murmured Chet. "I won't give up! Poor little kid—I guess *not!* I'll get her home——"

Prince began to bark. He could not move forward much faster than Chet did; but he faced to the right and began to bark with persistence.

"There—there's something over there, Chet," murmured Carolyn May. She was all but breathless herself.

Then, through the wind and the storm, came a faint hail. Prince eagerly pursued his barking. Chet tried to reply to the hail, but his voice was only a hoarse croak.

"We've got to keep on—we've got to keep on," muttered the lad, dragging the sled slowly.

His submersion in the icy water had been a serious matter. His limbs were too heavy, it seemed, for further progress. He scarcely knew now what he was doing—only the tolling of the chapel bell seemed to draw him on—and on—and on——

The dog had disappeared. Carolyn May was weeping frankly. Chet Gormley was pushing slowly through the storm, staggering at each step, scarcely aware in what direction he was heading.

CHAPTER XXIII

HOW TO WRITE A SERMON

JOSEPH STAGG heard the dog barking first of all. Rightchild and the cook were directly behind him, and when the hardware dealer bore suddenly off to the right they shouted after him.

"If the ice is breaking up, Joe, that's where she'll give way first—in the middle of the cove," Rightchild said.

"And the boy wouldn't know any better than to come right up the middle," Mr. Stagg declared.

"You're right," agreed the cook.

"Besides, there's the dog. Listen!"

Prince's barking was unmistakable now. The other men realised what the sound must mean. It was as convincing as the chapel bell; and that kept on as steadily as a clock pendulum.

The men with Mr. Stagg having spread out on the ice like a skirmishing party, now closed in towards the point from which sounded the dog's barking. The hardware dealer shouted as he ran. He was the most reckless of them all, and on several occasions came near to falling. The snow over the ice made the footing treacherous, indeed.

Suddenly an object appeared in the smother of falling snow. Hoarsely the dog barked again. Mr. Stagg shouted:

"Hey, Prince! Prince! Here we are!"

The mongrel made for the hardware merchant and almost knocked him over. He was mad with joy. He barked and whined and leaped upon the man; and the sight of Joseph Stagg down on his knees in the snow trying to hug the wriggling dog was certainly one to startle his neighbours.

"Show 'em to us, good dog!" cried Uncle Joe. "Take us to 'em! Where's Hannah's Car'lyn? Show us, boy!"

"That dog's a good un," declared Rightchild.

"Now you've said something," agreed the eating-house cook.

Prince lapped Mr. Stagg's face and then ran off through the falling snow, barking and leaping. The men hurried after him. Twice or thrice the dog was back, to make sure that he was followed. Then the men saw something outlined in the driving snow.

"Uncle Joe! Uncle Joe!"

The child's shrill voice reached the hardware merchant. There was poor Chet, staggering on, leaning against the wind, and pulling the sled behind him.

"Well, you silly chump!" growled Joseph Stagg. "Where're you going, anyway?"

"Oh, Uncle Joe!" wailed Carolyn May, "he

isn't anything like that, at all! He's just the very bravest boy! And he's all wet and cold."

At the conclusion of this declaration poor Chet fell to his knees, and then slipped quietly forward on his face.

"I vum!" grunted the hardware dealer, "I guess the boy is all in."

But Chet did not lose consciousness. He raised a faint murmur which reached Mr. Stagg's ears.

"I—I did the best I could, Mr. Stagg. Take—take her right up to mother. She'll fix Car'lyn up, all right."

"Say, kid!" exclaimed the cook, "I guess you need a bit of fixin' up yourself. Why, see here, boys, this chap's been in the water and his clothes is froze stiff."

"Pick him up and put him on the sled here, boys," Mr. Stagg said. "I'll carry Hannah's Car'lyn myself."

The party, including the excited Prince, got back to the docks without losing any time and without further accident. Still the chapel bell was ringing, and somebody said:

"We'd have been up a stump for knowing the direction, if it hadn't been for that bell."

"Me, too," muttered Chet Gormley. "That's what kep' me goin', folks—the chapel bell. It just seemed to be callin' me home."

Joseph Stagg carried his niece up to Mrs. Gormley's little house, while Rightchild helped Chet along

to the same destination. The seamstress met them at the door, wildly excited.

"And what do you think?" she cried. "They took Mandy Parlow home in Tim's hack. She was just done up, they tell me, pullin' that chapel bell. Did you ever hear of such a silly critter—just because she couldn't find the sexton!"

"Hum! you and I both seem to be mistaken about what constitutes silliness, Mrs. Gormley," grumbled the hardware dealer. "I was for calling your Chet silly, till I learned what he'd done. And you'd better not call Miss Mandy silly. The sound of the chapel bell gave us all our bearings. Both of 'em, Chet and Miss Mandy, did their best."

Carolyn May was taken home in Tim's hack, too. To her surprise, Tim was ordered to stop at the Parlow house and go in to ask how Miss Amanda was.

By this time the story of her pulling of the chapel-bell rope was all over Sunrise Cove, and the hack driver was, naturally, as curious as anybody. So he willingly went into the Parlow cottage, bringing back word that she was resting comfortably, Dr. Nugent having just left her.

"An' she's one brave gal," declared Tim. "Pitcher of George Washington! pullin' that bell rope ain't no baby's job."

Carolyn May did not altogether understand what Miss Amanda had done, but she was greatly pleased that Uncle Joe had so plainly displayed his interest

in the carpenter's daughter. On this particular occasion, however, she was so sleepy that she was lifted out of the hack when they reached home by Uncle Joe, who carried her into the house in his arms.

When Aunty Rose heard the outline of the story she bustled about at once to get the little girl to bed. She sat up in bed and had her supper, with Prince sitting close beside her on the floor and Aunty Rose watching her as though she felt that something of an exciting nature might happen at any moment to the little girl.

"I never did see such a child—I never did!" Aunty Rose repeated.

The next morning Carolyn May seemed to be in good condition. Indeed, she was the only individual vitally interested in the adventure who did not pay for the exposure. Even Prince had barked his legs being hauled out on to the ice. Uncle Joe had caught a bad cold in his head and suffered from it for some time. Miss Amanda remained in bed for several days. But it was poor Chet Gormley who paid the dearest price for participation in the exciting incident. Dr. Nugent had hard work fighting off pneumonia.

Mr. Stagg surprised himself by the interest he took in Chet. He closed his store twice each day to call at the Widow Gormley's house. The seamstress was so delighted with this attention on the hardware merchant's part that she was willing to accept at its face value Chet's hope and expectation

that *some* day the sign over the store door would read, "Stagg & Gormley."

It was a fact that Mr. Stagg found himself talking with Chet more than he ever had before. The boy was lonely, and the man found a spark of interest in his heart for him that he had never previously discovered. He began to probe into his young employee's thoughts, to learn something of his outlook on life; perhaps, even, he got some inkling of Chet's ambition.

That week the ice went entirely out of the cove. Spring was at hand, with its muddy roads, blue skies, sweeter airs, soft rains, and a general revivifying feeling.

Aunty Rose declared that Carolyn May began at once to "perk up." Perhaps the cold, long winter had been hard for the child to bear. At least, being able to run out of doors without stopping to bundle up was a delight.

One day the little girl had a more than ordinarily hard school task to perform. Everything did not come easy to Carolyn May, "by any manner of means," as Aunty Rose would have said. Composition writing was her bane, and Miss Minnie had instructed all Carolyn May's class to bring in a written exercise the next morning. The little girl wandered over to the churchyard with her slate and pencil—and Prince, of course—to try to achieve the composition.

The earth was dry and warm and the grass was

springing freshly. A soft wind blew from the south and brought with it the scent of growing things.

The windows of the minister's study overlooked this spot, and he was sitting at his desk while Carolyn May was laboriously writing the words on her slate (having learned to use a slate) which she expected later to copy into her composition book.

The Reverend Afton Driggs watched her puzzled face and labouring fingers for some moments before calling out of the window to her. Several sheets of sermon paper lay before him on the desk, and perhaps he was having almost as hard a time putting on the paper what he desired to say as Carolyn May was having with her writing.

Finally, he came to the window and spoke to her.

"Carolyn May," he said, "what are you writing?"

"Oh, Mr. Driggs, is that you?" said the little girl, getting up quickly and coming nearer. "Did you ever have to write a composition?"

"Yes, Carolyn May, I have to write one or two each week." And he sighed.

"Oh yes! So you do!" the little girl agreed. "You have to write sermons. And that must be a terribly tedious thing to do, for they have to be longer than my composition—a great deal longer."

"So it is a composition that is troubling you," the minister remarked.

"Yes, sir. I don't know what to write—I really don't. Miss Minnie says for us not to try any flights

of fancy. I don't just know what those are. But she says, write what is in us. Now, *that* don't seem like a composition," added Carolyn May doubtfully.

"What doesn't?"

"Why, writing what is in us," explained the little girl, staring in a puzzled fashion at her state, on which she had written several lines. "You see, I have written down all the things that I 'member is in me."

"For pity's sake! let me see it, child," said the minister, quickly reaching down for the slate. When he brought it to a level with his eyes he was amazed by the following:

"In me there is my heart, my liver, my lungs, my verform pendicks, my stummick, two ginger cookies, a piece of pepmint candy, and my dinner."

"For pity's sake!" Mr. Driggs shut off this explosion by a sudden cough.

"I guess it isn't much of a composition, Mr. Driggs," Carolyn May said frankly. "But how can you make your inwards be pleasant reading?"

The minister was having no little difficulty in restraining his mirth.

"Go around to the door, Carolyn May, and ask Mrs. Driggs to let you in. Perhaps I can help you in this composition writing."

"Oh, *will* you, Mr. Driggs?" cried the little girl. "That is awful kind of you."

The minister must have confided in his wife before she came to the door to let Carolyn May in, for she was laughing heartily.

"You funny little thing!" cried Mrs. Driggs, catching her up in her arms. "Mr. Driggs says he is waiting for you—and this sermon day, too! Go into his study."

The clergyman did not seem to mind neglecting his task for the pleasure of helping Carolyn May with hers. He explained quite clearly just what Miss Minnie meant by "writing what is in you."

"Oh! It's what you think about a thing yourself—not what other folks think," cried Carolyn May. "Why, I can do that. I thought it was something like those physerology lessons. Then I can write about anything I want to, can't I?"

"I think so," replied the minister.

"I'm awfully obliged to you, Mr. Driggs," the little girl said. "I wish I might do something for you in return."

"Help me with my sermon, perhaps?" he asked, smiling.

"I would if I could, Mr. Driggs." Carolyn May was very earnest.

"Well, now, Carolyn May, how would you go about writing a sermon, if you had one to write?"

"Oh, Mr. Driggs!" exclaimed the little girl, clasping her hands. "I know just how I'd do it."

"You do? Tell me how, then, my dear," he returned, smiling. "Perhaps you have an inspira-

tion for writing sermons that I have never yet found."

"Why, Mr. Driggs, I'd try to write every word so's to make folks that heard it happier. That's what I'd do. I'd make 'em *look up* and see the sunshine and the sky—and the mountains, 'way off yonder—so they'd see nothing but bright things and breathe only good air and hear birds sing— Oh, dear me, *that*—that is the way I'd write a sermon."

The clergyman's face had grown grave as he listened to her, but he kissed her warmly as he thanked her and bade her good-bye. When she had gone from the study he read again the text written at the top of the first sheet of sermon paper. It was taken from the book of the Prophet Jeremiah.

"'To write every word so's to make folks that heard it happier,'" he murmured as he crumpled the sheet of paper in his hand and dropped it in the waste-basket.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE AWAKENING

WITH the opening of spring and the close of the sledding season, work had stopped at Adams' camp. Rather, the entire plant had been shipped twenty miles deeper into the forest—mill, bunk-house, cook-shed, and such corrugated-iron shacks as were worth carting away.

All that was left on the site of the busy camp were huge heaps of sawdust, piles of slabs, discarded timbers, and the half-burned bricks into which had been built the portable boiler and engine.

And old Judy Mason. She was not considered worth moving to the new site of the camp. She was bedridden with rheumatism. This was the report Tim, the hackman, had brought in.

The old woman's husband had gone with the outfit to the new camp, for he could not afford to give up his work. Judy had not been so bad when the camp was broken up, but when Tim went over for a load of slabs for summer firewood, he discovered her quite helpless in her bunk and almost starving. The rheumatic attack had become serious.

Amanda Parlow had at once ridden over with Dr.

Nugent. Then she had come home for her bag and had insisted on the carpenter's driving her back to the abandoned camp, proposing to stay with Judy till the old woman was better.

Aunty Rose had one comment to make upon it, and Carolyn May another. Mr. Stagg's housekeeper said:

"That is just like a parcel of men folks—leaving an old woman to look out for herself. Disgraceful! And Amanda Parlow will not even be thanked for what she does."

"How brave and helpful it is of Miss Amanda!" Carolyn May cried. "Dear me, when I grow up, I hope I can be a gradjerate nurse like Miss Mandy."

"I reckon that's some spell ahead," chuckled Mr. Parlow, to whom she said this when he picked her up for a drive after taking his daughter to the camp.

"And you'll come nigh to wantin' to be a dozen other things 'fore you're old enough to go to work in a hospital, I shouldn't wonder. Gidap, Cherry!"

Cherry tossed his head and increased his stride. The carpenter had one weakness—that was horse-flesh. He was always the owner of a roadster of note.

"That's a funny name for a horse, Mr. Parlow," observed Carolyn May.

"Cherry red. That's his colour."

"Oh!"

"And I got a cat home that's cherry colour, too."

"Why-e-e-e!" exclaimed the little girl, "I'm sure

I never saw that one, Mr. Parlow. Your cat is black—all black."

"Well," chuckled the old man over the ancient joke, "he's the colour of a blackheart cherry."

"Oh, my! I never thought of that," giggled Carolyn May. She looked up into his hard, dry face with an expression of perplexity in her own. "Mr. Parlow," she went on seriously, "don't you think *now* that Miss Amanda ought to be happy?"

"Happy!" exclaimed the carpenter, startled. "What about, child?"

"Why, about everything. You know, once I asked you about her being happy, and—and you didn't seem fav'rable. You said 'Bah!'"

Carolyn May's imitation of that explosive word as previously used by Mr. Parlow was absolutely funny; but the carpenter only looked at her sidewise, and his face remained grim.

"So I said 'Bah,' did I?" he grunted. "And what makes you think I might not say it now?"

"Why," explained Carolyn May earnestly, "I hoped you'd come to see things like—like I do. You are lots pleasanter than you used to be, Mr. Parlow—indeed, you are. You are happier yourself."

The old man made no reply for a minute, and Carolyn May had the patience to wait for her suggestion to "sink in." Finally, he said:

"I dunno but you're right, Car'lyn May. Not that it matters much, I guess, whether a body's happy or not in this world," he added grudgingly.

"Oh, yes, it does, Mr. Parlow! It matters a great deal, I am sure—to us and to other people. If we're not happy *inside* of us, how can we be cheerful *outside,* and so make other people happy? And that is what I mean about Miss Amanda."

"What about Mandy?"

"She isn't happy," sighed Carolyn May. "Not really. She's just as good as good can be. She is always doing for folks, and helping. But she can't be real happy."

"Why not?" growled Mr. Parlow, his face turned away.

"Why—'cause— Well, you *know,* Mr. Parlow, she can't be happy as long as she and my Uncle Joe are mad at each other."

Mr. Parlow uttered another grunt, but the child went bravely on.

"You know very well that's so. And I don't know what to do about it. It just seems too awful that they should hardly speak, and yet be so fond of each other deep down."

"How d'you know they're so fond of each other —deep down?" Mr. Parlow demanded.

"I know my Uncle Joe likes Miss Mandy, 'cause he always speaks so—so respectful of her. And I can see she likes him, in her eyes," replied the observant Carolyn May. "Oh, yes, Mr. Parlow, they ought to be happy again, and we ought to make 'em so."

"Huh! Who ought to?"

"You and me. We ought to find some way of doing it. I'm sure we can, if we just think hard about it."

"Huh!" grunted the carpenter again, turning Cherry into the dooryard. "Huh!"

This was not a very encouraging response. Yet he did think of it. The little girl had started a train of thought in Mr. Parlow's mind that he could not sidetrack.

He knew very well that what she had said about his daughter and Joseph Stagg was quite true. In his selfishness he had been glad all these years that the hardware merchant was balked of happiness. As for his daughter's feelings, Mr. Parlow had put them aside as "women's foolishness." He had never much considered women in his life.

The carpenter had always been a self-centred individual, desirous of his own comfort, and rather miserly. He had not approved, in the first place, of the intimacy between Joseph Stagg and his daughter Amanda.

"No good'll come o' *that,*" he had told himself.

That is, no good to Jedidiah Parlow. He foresaw at the start the loss of the girl's help about the house, for his wife was then a helpless invalid.

Then Mrs. Parlow died. This death made plainer still to the carpenter that Mandy's marriage was bound to bring inconvenience to him. Especially if she married a close-fisted young business man like Joe Stagg would this be true. For, at the reading of his

wife's will, Mr. Parlow discovered that the property they occupied, even the shop in which he worked, which had been given to Mrs. Parlow by her parents, was to be the sole property of her daughter. Mandy was the heir. Mr. Parlow did not possess even a life interest in the estate.

It was a blow to the carpenter. He made a good income and had money in bank, but he loved money too well to wish to spend it after he had made it. He did not want to give up the place. If Mandy remained unmarried there would never be any question between them of rent or the like.

Therefore, if he was not actually the cause of the difference that arose between the two young people, he seized and enlarged upon it and did all in his power to make a mere misunderstanding grow into a quarrel that neither of the proud, high-spirited lovers would bridge.

Jedidiah Parlow knew why Joe Stagg had taken that other girl to Faith Camp Meeting. The young man had stopped at the Parlow place when Amanda was absent and explained to the girl's father. But the latter had never mentioned this fact to his daughter.

Instead, he had made Joe's supposed offense the greater by suggestion and innuendo. And it was he, too, who had urged the hurt Mandy to retaliate by going to the dance with another young man. Meeting Joe Stagg later, the carpenter had said bitter things to him, purporting to come from Mandy. It

was all mean and vile; the old man knew it now—as he had known it then.

All these years he had tried to add fuel to the fire of his daughter's anger against Joe Stagg. And he believed he had benefited thereby. But, somehow, during the past few months, he had begun to wonder if, after all, "the game was worth the candle."

Suddenly he had gained a vision of what Amanda Parlow's empty life meant to her. And it was empty, he knew—empty of that love which every woman craves; empty of the greatest thing that can come into her life.

Mr. Parlow had realised what had been denied his daughter when he had first seen Carolyn May in Mandy's arms. That was the thing lacking. The love of children, the right to care for children of her own. He had been practically the cause of this denial. Sometimes, when he thought of it, the carpenter was rather shaken. Suppose he should be called to account for his daughter's loss?

Carolyn May, interested only in seeing her friends made happy, had no idea of the turmoil she had created in Mr. Parlow's mind. She went her way as usual, scattering sunshine, and hiding as much as she could the trouble that gnawed in her own heart.

The love of Uncle Joe and Aunty Rose and Miss Amanda and Mr. Driggs and the host of her other friends at The Corners and in Sunrise Cove could not take the place in faithful little Carolyn May's heart of that parental affection which had been so

lavished on her all the days of her life, until the sailing of the *Dunraven*.

Had the little girl possessed brothers and sisters, it might have been different. Mr. and Mrs. Cameron could not, in that case, have devoted themselves so entirely to the little girl.

She had been her mother's close companion and her father's chum. True, it had made her "old-fashioned"—old in speech and in her attitude towards many things in life, but she was none the less charming because of this difference between her and other children.

Her upbringing had indeed made her what she was. She thought more deeply than other children of her age. Her nature was the logical outgrowth of such training as she had received from associating with older people.

She was seriously desirous of seeing Uncle Joe and Miss Amanda made happy in their love for each other. She was a born matchmaker—there was no doubt of that.

During the time that the nurse was at the abandoned lumber camp caring for Judy Mason, Carolyn May hoped that something might take Uncle Joe there. She even tried to get him to drive her over to see Miss Amanda on Sunday afternoon. But Uncle Joe did not keep a horse himself, and he would not be coaxed into hiring one for any such excursion.

"Besides, what would your Aunty Rose say?"

he asked his little niece. "She would not approve of our doing such a thing on the Lord's Day, I am sure."

Nevertheless, he was as eager as a boy to do it. It was because he shrank from having the neighbours comment on his doing the very thing he desired to do that he so sternly refused to consider Carolyn May's suggestion. Those neighbours might think that he was deliberately going to call on Miss Amanda!

The next Friday, after school was out, Miss Amanda appeared at the Stagg home and suggested taking Carolyn May into the woods with her, "for the week-end," as she laughingly said. Tim, the hackman, had brought the nurse home for a few hours and would take her back to Judy's cabin.

"Poor old Judy is much better, but she is still suffering and cannot be left alone for long," Miss Amanda said. "Carolyn May will cheer her up."

Delighted, Carolyn May ran to get ready. Spring was far advanced and the woods were very beautiful. And to stay all night—two whole nights—in a log cabin seemed wonderfully attractive to the little girl.

Aunty Rose let her go because she knew that Uncle Joe would approve of it. Indeed, they had talked the matter over already. Carolyn May missed Miss Amanda so that the hardware dealer had already agreed to some such arrangement as this. Mr. Parlow would drive over on Sunday afternoon and bring the little girl home. Of course, Prince had to go along.

That Friday evening at supper matters in the big kitchen of the Stagg house were really at a serious pass. Joseph Stagg sat down to the table visibly without appetite. Aunty Rose drank one cup of tea after another without putting a crumb between her lips.

"What's the matter with you to-night, Joseph Stagg?" his housekeeper finally demanded. "Aren't the victuals good enough for you?"

"No," said Mr. Stagg drily, "I think they're poisoned. You don't expect me to eat if you don't set an example, do you?"

"What I do has nothing to do with you, Joseph Stagg," said Mrs. Kennedy, bridling. "I'm pecking and tasting at victuals all day long. I get so I despise 'em."

"Yes," returned Mr. Stagg. "And if Hannah's Car'lyn don't come back, I shall get to despise 'em, too."

"Ha!" ejaculated the old lady. "You do miss the little thing."

"Miss her? Bless me! I wouldn't believe it made so much difference having her about. It's knowing she really is away, and is going to be gone for a couple of days, that's the matter, I s'pose. Say, Aunty Rose!"

"What is it, Joseph Stagg?"

"What under the sun did we do before Hannah's Car'lyn came here, anyway? Seems to me we didn't really live, did we?"

Aunty Rose had no answer to make to these questions.

Uncle Joe missed kissing the little girl good-night. He even missed the rattle of Prince's chain at the dog-house when he came back from the store late in the evening.

The air had grown heavy and close, and he stood on the porch for a minute and snuffed knowingly at the odour a good deal as the dog might.

"There's a fire over the mountain, I guess," he said to Aunty Rose when he entered the house. "We're having a dry spring."

They went to bed. In the morning there was a smoky fog over everything—a fog that the sun did not dissipate, and behind which it looked like an enormous saffron ball.

Mr. Stagg went down to the store as usual. On the way he passed the Parlow place, and he saw the carpenter in his shop door. Parlow was gazing with seeming anxiety into the fog cloud, his face turned towards the forest. Joseph Stagg did not know that, in all the years of their estrangement, the carpenter had never been so near speaking to the hardware dealer.

The smoky tang in the air was as strong in Sunrise Cove as out in the country. The shopkeepers were talking about the fire. News had come over the long-distance wires that thousands of acres of woodland were burning, that the forest reserves were out, and that the farmers of an entire township on the

far side of the mountain were engaged in trying to make a barrier over which the flames would not leap. It was the consensus of opinion, however, that the fire would not cross the range. It never had on former occasions, and the wind was against such an advance. The top of the ridge was covered with boulders and the vegetation was scant.

"Scarcely any chance of its swooping down on us," decided Mr. Stagg. "Reckon I won't have to go home to plough fire furrows."

At the usual hour he started for The Corners for dinner. Having remained in the store all the morning, he had not realised how much stronger the smell of smoke was than it had been at breakfast time. Quite involuntarily he quickened his pace.

The fog and smoke overcast the sky thickly and made it of a brassy colour, just as though a huge copper pot had been overturned over the earth. Women stood at their doors, talking back and forth together in low tones. There was a spirit of expectancy in the air. Every person he saw was affected by it.

There seemed scarcely any danger of a forest fire sweeping in upon Sunrise Cove, or even upon The Corners. There was too much cleared land surrounding the town. But what was happening on the other side of the mountain? The peril that other people were in moved his neighbours. Joseph Stagg was affected himself. And for another reason.

Down in the thick woods, ten miles away, were

two women and a child in a cabin. Suppose the fire *should* cross the range?

The hardware merchant was striding along at a quick pace when he came to the Parlow place; but he was not going so fast that he did not hear the carpenter hailing him in his cracked voice.

"Hey, you, Joe Stagg! Hey, you!"

Amazed, Mr. Stagg turned to look. Parlow was hobbling from the rear premises, groaning at every step, scarcely able to walk.

"That sciatica's got me ag'in," he snarled. "I'm a'most doubled up. Couldn't climb into a carriage to save my soul."

"What d'you want to climb into a carriage for?" demanded Mr. Stagg.

"'Cause somebody's got to go for that gal of mine—and little Car'lyn May. Ain't you heard—or is your mind so sot on makin' money down there to your store that you don't know nothin' else?"

"Haven't I heard what?" returned the other with fine restraint, for he saw the old man was in pain.

"The fire's come over to this side. I saw the flames myself. And Aaron Crummit drove through and says that you can't git by on the main road. The fire's followed the West Brook right down and is betwixt us and Adams' old camp."

"Bless me!" gasped the hardware dealer, paling under his tan.

"Wal?" snarled Parlow. "Goin' to stand there chatterin' all day, or be you goin' to do something?"

CHAPTER XXV

THE FOREST FIRE

"SOMEBODY must get over to that cabin and bring them out," Joseph Stagg said, without taking offence at the crabbed old carpenter.

"Wal!" exclaimed Parlow, "glad ter see you're awake."

"Oh, I'm awake," the other returned shortly. "I was just figuring on who's got the best horse."

"I have," snapped Parlow.

"Yes. And I'd decided on taking Cherry, too," the hardware dealer added, and swung into the lane towards the carpenter's barn.

"Hey, you! Needn't be so brash about it," growled the carpenter. "He's my hoss, I s'pose?"

Joseph Stagg went straight ahead, and without answering. Having once decided on his course, he wasted no time.

He rolled back the big door and saw Cherry already harnessed in his boxstall. Mr. Parlow had got that far, but knew that he could not attempt putting the spirited creature into the shafts of the light buckboard that was drawn out on the barn floor.

"You be as easy as ye can be with him, Joe

Stagg," groaned the carpenter, hanging to the door-frame. "He's touchy—and I don't want him abused."

"You've never driven a better horse than I have, Jedidiah Parlow," snapped the hardware merchant as he led Cherry out of the stall.

Together they backed the animal between the shafts, fastened the traces, and Mr. Stagg leaped quickly to the seat and gathered up the reins.

"You'll hafter take the Fallow Road," the carpenter shouted after him. "And have a care drivin' Cherry——"

Horse and buckboard whirled out of the yard and his voice was lost to the hardware merchant. The latter looked neither to the right nor the left as he drove through The Corners. On the store porch a dozen idle men were congregated, but he had no time for them. He did not even stop to warn Aunty Rose.

Cherry stepped out splendidly, and they left a cloud of dust behind them as they rolled up the pike, not in the direction of the abandoned camp. Forewarned, he did not seek to take the shortest way to the cabin where Amanda Parlow and Carolyn May were perhaps even now threatened by the forest fire. The Fallow Road turned north from the pike three miles from The Corners.

Flecks of foam began to appear on Cherry's glossy coat almost at once. The air was very oppressive, and there was no breeze.

This last fact Mr. Stagg considered a blessing.

With no movement of the air, the fire could not spread rapidly.

The streak of flame that had followed down the banks of West Brook moved mysteriously. He could see the smoke of it now, hanging in a thick cloud above the ravine through which the water-course flowed. He was tempted to believe that this was a fire set on this side of the mountain ridge. Yet Parlow had said he had seen the flames when the fire crossed the summit.

The sweating horse kept up his unbroken stride, and the buckboard—a frail-looking, but strongly built, vehicle—bounded over the rough road at a pace to distract one unused to such riding. But Joseph Stagg cared nothing for the jolting. His thought was wholly fixed on the fire and on those who might be imperiled by it.

Amanda Parlow and his niece might even now be threatened by the flames! The thought shook the hardware dealer to his depths.

He was not a demonstrative man, that was true. His strongest feelings he hid away in his heart; and the world at large—even those nearest to him—suspected little of the emotions that seethed in Joseph Stagg's heart and brain.

Towards Carolyn May he had finally shown something of this deeper feeling. She had fairly forced him to do this.

And his very soul hungered for Amanda Parlow. But she was denied to him, and he shrank, as a man

with a raw wound shrinks from unskilful touch, from letting anybody suspect his feeling for the carpenter's daughter.

Of late, since Amanda had spoken to him, since the day when Caroline May and Chet Gormley had been lost out on the ice and the nurse had so courageously rung the chapel bell, Joseph Stagg's mind had been less on business than at any time in twenty years.

He thought of Amanda Parlow. He saw her while bending over the big ledger in the back office. In his memory rang the low, mellow tones of her voice. He even heard her laugh, although it had been a score of years since he had actually been within sound of her laughter.

Now that danger threatened the woman he had loved all these years, it seemed as though his mind and heart were numbed. He was terrified beyond expression—terrified for her safety, and terrified for fear that somebody, even Jedidiah Parlow, should suspect just how he felt about it.

From the very first instant he had known the danger of the women and the child, Joseph Stagg had determined to get to them and save them. The barrier of the fire itself should not keep him back.

The stillness and oppressiveness of the atmosphere finally made an impression on his mind. He noted that already the animal life of the forest seemed to have taken fright and to have escaped. Not a rabbit, not a squirrel, was in evidence. A

single jay winged his way through the wood, shrieking discordantly. Although it was the height of the mating season, the song birds were dumb.

The smoke grew heavier as he pushed on. It was sharp in his nostrils, and his breathing became laboured.

Cherry showed that he felt the stifling atmosphere, too. He tossed his proud head and snorted. Long strings of froth dripped from his bit, and his whole body had turned dark with sweat. Mr. Parlow might have felt doubtful of the horse's well-being had he seen Cherry now.

The hardware dealer drove straight on. He looked out for the horse's pace, for he was a careful driver, but he was out for no pleasure jaunt. There was work for the horse to do.

Joseph Stagg knew the country hereabout perfectly. From boyhood he had hunted, fished, and tramped all over the township. He was still five miles from the camp, approaching it by a roundabout way.

The horse's hoofs rang sharply over the stony path. Presently they capped a little ridge and started down into a hollow. Not until they were over the ridge was Mr. Stagg aware that the hollow was filled, chokingly filled, with billowy white smoke.

There was, too, a crackling sound in the air. V-points of red and yellow flame suddenly flecked the bole of a tall, dead pine beside the path, and right ahead.

Another man—one as cautious as the hardware merchant notoriously was—would have pulled the horse down to a walk. But Joseph Stagg's cautiousness had been flung to the winds. Instead, he shouted to Cherry, and the beast increased his stride.

The man knew that hollow well. At the bottom flowed Codler's Creek, a larger stream than West Brook. Indeed, West Brook joined its waters with Codler's Creek. The fire must have come into this cut, too. Then, in all probability, a couple of thousand acres of standing timber were afire on this side of the mountain!

Ten rods further on the horse snorted, stumbled, and tried to stop. A writhing, flaming snake—a burning branch—plunged down through the smoke directly ahead.

"Go on!" shouted Joseph Stagg, with a sharpness that would ordinarily have set Cherry off at a gallop.

But, as the snorting creature still shied, the man seized the whip and lashed poor Cherry cruelly along his flank.

At that the horse went mad. He plunged forward, leaped the blazing brand, and galloped down the road at a perilous gait. The man tried neither to soothe him nor to retard the pace.

The smoke swirled around them. The driver could not see ten feet beyond the horse's nose. If a tree should fall across the track, disaster was certain.

But this catastrophe did not occur. Within a few

furlongs, however, flames danced ahead on either side of the road.

"The bridge!" gasped Joseph Stagg.

The bridge over the creek was a wooden structure with a rustic railing on either hand. Flames had seized upon this and were streaming up from the rails.

It was fortunate that there was so little wind. The flames were perpendicular and rose, as Joseph Stagg sat in the buckboard, higher than his head.

The man leaned forward and once more laid the whip along Cherry's flank. Later, Mr. Parlow was destined to mark both those welts and to vow that "Joseph Stagg did not know how to treat a horse!"

Now, however, there was no thought in Joseph Stagg's mind regarding what Mr. Parlow might say or think. He had to get over that blazing bridge!

Cherry took the platform in great leaps. The bridge swung, sank, fire spurted through the planks almost under the horse's heels, and then, just as the wheels left the shaking structure, the rear end of the bridge slipped off the abutments. The fire must have been eating out the heart of the timbers for two hours.

Cherry ran madly. The smoke, the smarting of several small burns, the loud crash of the falling bridge maddened the horse to such a degree that Joseph Stagg could scarcely hold him. Ten minutes later they rattled down into the straight road, and then, very soon, indeed, were at the abandoned camp.

The fire was near, but it had not reached this place. There was no sign of life about.

The man knew which was Judy's cabin. He leaped from the vehicle, leaving the panting Cherry unhitched, and ran to the hut.

The door swung open. The poor furniture was in place. Even the bedclothing was rumpled in the old woman's bunk. But neither she nor Amanda Parlow nor little Carolyn May was there.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE LAUREL TO THE BRAVE

THE heart of the man was like a weight in his bosom. With so many hundred acres of forest on fire, and that, too, between the abandoned camp and The Corners and Sunrise Cove, how would Amanda Parlow and Carolyn May know where to go?

In what direction would they run? There was no stream of any size near this camp. Water had been obtained from easily driven wells. Mr. Stagg could not imagine in that first few minutes of alarm how the fugitives could have got away from the camp.

Smoke hung in a heavy cloud over the clearing. The smell of burning wood was very strong.

To go was, perhaps, the wisest thing Amanda and her charges could have done, for once the fire got into this opening the place would soon become a raging furnace.

The great heaps of sawdust and rubbish, as dry as tinder, offered fuel for the flames unsurpassed elsewhere in the forest. This clearing, three or four acres in extent, would be the hottest part of the fire, if once the wind rose and blew the conflagration in

its direction. Mr. Stagg climbed to the roof of the cabin to look over the open space. He shouted at the top of his voice. But he neither saw nor heard anything. His voice came back in a flat echo from the forest wall across the clearing—that was all.

There was no way of trailing the fugitives—he knew that well enough. Of course, there were plenty of cartwheel tracks; but they told nothing of interest to the troubled hardware dealer.

He slid down from the roof and went again into the cabin. Certainly the place must have been deserted in haste. There was Carolyn May's coat. The man caught it up and stared around, as though expecting the child to be within sight.

The old woman's clothing was scattered about, too. It did not look as though anything had been removed from the hut. Coming out, he found another article on the threshold—one of Amanda's gloves.

Joseph Stagg picked it up eagerly and stood for a moment or two holding it in his hand as he gazed from the doorway upon the empty prospect. Then he lifted the crumpled glove to his lips.

"Oh, God, spare her!" he burst forth. "Spare them both!"

Then he kissed the glove again and hid it away in the inner pocket of his vest.

The hardware dealer tried to think of just what the fugitives might have done when they escaped from the cabin. Surely, they would not start for

The Corners by the main road—that would take them directly towards the fire. Joseph Stagg had too good an opinion of Amanda Parlow's common sense to believe that.

And what would they do with the sick woman—how take her with them? She was crippled and could travel neither far nor fast.

This disappearance suggested to the man's mind one certain fact: Sòmething had already happened to the fugitives; some accident had befallen them.

The thought almost overpowered him. He was chilled to the heart. Despair made him helpless for the moment. He could think of nothing further to do. He seemed to have come to an impassable barrier.

The sight of poor Cherry, standing with heaving sides and hanging head, awoke him. He started into action once more and hurried to the horse. Taking him out of the harness, he rubbed him down with a coarse sack. Then he found a pail at the cabin and brought the animal a drink. Once more he put him back into the shafts and prepared to move on.

If it were true that Amanda would not run towards the fire, then she more than likely had taken the opposite direction on leaving the cabin. Therefore, Joseph Stagg went that way—setting off down the tote road, leading Cherry by his bridle.

Suddenly he remembered calling Prince the day Carolyn May had been lost on the ice. He raised his voice in a mighty shout for the dog now.

"Prince! Princey, old boy! where are you?"

Again and again he called, but there was no reply. The smoke was more stifling and the heat more intense every minute. As he reached the far edge of the clearing he looked back to see a huge tree break into flame on the opposite side of the open space.

The camp would soon be a furnace of flame!

Joseph Stagg was not fearful for himself. He knew a dozen paths out of this part of the forest. But he could not leave without finding the fugitives or learning the way of their departure.

The forest here was like a jungle on both sides of the tote road. Once let the fire get into it, it would burn with the intense heat of a blast furnace. Mr. Stagg realised that he must get out quickly if he would save himself and the horse.

He had just stepped into the buckboard again, when there was an excited scrambling in the underbrush, and a welcoming bark was given.

"Prince! Good boy!" the man shouted. "Where are they?"

The excited dog flew at him, leaping on the buckboard so as to reach him. The mongrel was delighted, and showed it as plainly as a dumb brute could.

But he was anxious, too. He leaped back to the ground, ran a little ahead, and then looked back to see if the man was following. The hardware dealer shouted to him again:

"Go ahead, Princey! We're coming!"

He picked up the reins and Cherry started. The dog, barking his satisfaction, ran on ahead and struck into a side path which led down a glade. Joseph Stagg knew immediately where this path led to. There was a spring and a small morass in the bottom of the hollow.

"Bless me!" he thought, "once this fire gets to going, the heat will lick up that spring in a mouthful."

He forced Cherry into the path. It was somewhat difficult to push through with the buckboard. Prince still barked, running ahead.

"Go on! Good dog!" cried Mr. Stagg. "Lead the way to Hannah's Car'lyn!"

He heard the little girl screaming: "Oh, Uncle Joe! Oh, Uncle Joe! Here we are!"

Cherry rattled the buckboard down to the bottom of the hollow and stopped. There was some smoke here, but not much. The man leaped to the ground when he saw a figure rise up from the foot of a tree by the spring—a figure in brown.

"Joseph! Thank God!" murmured Amanda.

The hardware dealer strode to her. She had put out both her hands to him, and he saw that they were trembling, and that tears filled her great brown eyes.

"Oh, Joe!" she said, "I feared you would come too late!"

"But I'm here, Mandy, and I'm not too late!" he cried; and, somehow—neither of them could, perhaps, have explained just how—his arms went

around her and her hands rested on his shoulders, while she looked earnestly into his face.

"Oh, Joe! Joe!" It was like a surrendering sob.

"It's not too late, is it, Mandy? Say it isn't too late!" he pleaded.

"No, it's not too late," she whispered. "If—if we're not too old."

"Old!" almost shouted Joseph Stagg. "I don't remember of ever feeling so young as I do right now!" and suddenly he stooped and kissed her. "Bless me! what fools we've been all this time!"

"Oh, Uncle Joe! Oh, Miss Amanda!" cried Carolyn May, standing before them, and pointing with a rather grimy index finger. "You aren't mad at each other any more, are you? Oh, I am so glad! so glad!" and her face showed her pleasure.

But the situation was too difficult to allow of much but practical thoughts.

"Where's the old woman?" asked Joseph Stagg quickly.

"Her husband came with a horse and buggy late last night and took her over to the new camp," was the reply. "Of course, there was not room for Carolyn May and me—and we did not wish to go, anyway.

"Judy is much better, poor soul, and I was glad to be relieved of her care. Mr. Mason warned me there was a big fire over the mountain, but I had no idea it would come this way."

"You aren't mad at each other any more, are you?"

"No. And nobody else," grumbled Mr. Stagg. "But it has come—and it's moving mighty quick now. How came you down here, Mandy—you and Hannah's Car'lyn?"

"We were really badly frightened, Joe," she replied, smiling up at him. "I'm afraid I became panic-stricken when I saw a tall tree on fire not far from the camp, and we ran down here where there was water, leaving everything at the cabin."

"But there isn't water enough," declared the man fretfully. "That's the trouble with this place. We can't stay here."

"You know best, Joe," said Amanda Parlow, with a loving woman's logic.

"What you've left at the cabin will have to stay there," he said. "We can't go back. I tell you, the fire was coming into the camp when I left."

"Oh, Joe, we must hurry, then!" she murmured simply.

"We aren't going to be burned up now, when Uncle Joe is here, Miss Mandy," Carolyn May declared with confidence. "See how nice he and Prince found us? Why, they are reg'lar heroes, aren't they?"

"They are, indeed, child," agreed the woman. She turned to Joseph Stagg, happiness shining in her eyes, and looking prettier than ever before in her life, he thought.

The hollow was rapidly becoming filled with smoke. The man did not understand this, but it

foreboded trouble. He turned Cherry and the buckboard around, and then he helped Amanda into the seat.

"Up you go, too, Car'lyn May," he said, lifting the little girl into the rear of the buckboard. "Hang on, there! Don't dare fall off!"

"Oh, I'll be all right, Uncle Joe," she declared, laughing gaily. Then she said to Prince. "Don't run off, Princey. You mustn't get lost from us now, for the fire is coming."

Joseph Stagg felt very serious as he seated himself by Amanda's side and picked up the reins. The horse quickly retraced his steps up the hill to the tote road. As they came out into this broader path they saw the smoke pouring through it in a choking cloud. The road was like a tunnel through the thick forest, and the breeze, which was rising, drove the smoke on. Behind, there was a subdued murmur and crackling.

"Oh, Joe," gasped Amanda, "it's coming!"

"It surely is," agreed the hardware merchant. "We're in a hot corner, my girl. But trust to me——"

"Oh, I do, Joe!" she exclaimed, squeezing his arm. "I am sure you know what is best to do."

"I'll try to prove that so," he said with a subdued chuckle.

"Oh, Uncle Joe!" cried Carolyn May suddenly, "can't we get out of this awful smoke? It—it chokes me!"

"Wait," whispered Amanda to the man. "I'll lift her over the back of the seat. I think she had better be in my lap."

"P'r'aps that's so," he agreed, and he held in the nervous Cherry for a moment till the change was accomplished.

Poor little Carolyn May's eyes had begun to water, and she complained of a pain in her chest from swallowing the smoke.

"I—I thought this was going to be an—an *awfully* exciting adventure; but I don't like it a bit now!" the little girl sobbed.

Miss Amanda held her close, and Uncle Joe drove on as rapidly as possible. The way was rough and they were jolted a good deal. Prince trotted on behind them, his tongue out, and occasionally coughing; but he was better off than his human friends, for he was nearer the ground, where the smoke was not so heavy.

There was just wind enough, and coming from the right direction, to drive the smoke through the tunnel of the wagon road. The fire itself was not yet near. Joseph Stagg, nevertheless, was seriously troubled by the situation.

Following the direction this road led, they would be going farther and farther from home. And, if the wind increased, it was very doubtful if they could keep ahead of the fire for long.

However, he did not display his knowledge of these troublesome facts to his companions. As for

Amanda Parlow, she hugged the little girl tightly and kept up a show of cheerful spirits.

Prince whined and yapped pleadingly, and the man stopped for a moment to let the dog leap to the rear of the buckboard, where he crouched, panting.

It would not be wise for them to halt often, nor for long. The wind, although steady, was rising. The roaring of the fire grew louder and louder in their ears.

Suddenly Joseph Stagg dragged Cherry's head around. The horse snorted and hesitated, for the smoke was blinding him.

"I pretty near missed these forks!" exclaimed the hardware merchant. "This left road takes us towards the lake."

"Oh, Joe, can we reach it?" whispered Amanda.

"We've *got* to!" he returned grimly. "It's three miles, if it's an inch, but Cherry has got to make it."

They were relieved after a minute or two in this new road. The smoke had not so completely filled it. But it was a rougher way, and the buckboard bounced until Carolyn May cried out in fear and the mongrel whined and sprawled all over the rear platform.

"You want to hang on, dog, with teeth and toe-nails," said Joseph Stagg grimly. "We can't stop for you if you fall off."

Prince seemed to know that, for never did anima!

cling more faithfully to an uneasy situation. Once or twice he came near to being pitched clear of the wagon body.

They drove over a little hillock that raised them higher than the tote road had done. Amanda clutched Mr. Stagg's arm again and uttered a half-stifled "Oh!"

He shot a glance to the left. A mass of flame broke out in the wood not far off this trail—the top of a great tree was on fire.

"The wind is carrying brands this way," muttered the man. "A dozen new fires will be started. Well, gid-ap, Cherry!" and he seized the whip again.

The horse was well spent now, but he was plucky. He tried to increase his stride. A hot breath of wind came rushing through the forest, bending the branches and shaking the leafy foliage. The wind seemed fairly to scorch the fugitives.

Carolyn May had hidden her face on Miss Amanda's shoulder and was sobbing quietly. Both of her human companions were painfully aware that breathing the smoke-filled air was hurting them.

Mr. Stagg hurried the labouring horse on as rapidly as he dared. Cherry coughed every few steps; the man did not want to bring the horse to his knees. Their very lives depended on the animal.

The roaring of the fire increased. Through the more open woods which bordered this path they saw the smoke advancing in a thicker wall—and one as high as the tree tops. Through the curtain of this

smoke cloud red tongues of flame leaped forward to lick up hungrily patches of underbrush or to fasten on certain trees.

"You've got to make it, old boy," muttered Joseph Stagg, and he lashed the horse again.

The spirited Cherry leaped forward, both the woman and the child screaming.

"Hang on," advised Mr. Stagg. "The road makes a turn just ahead, and that's mighty lucky for us."

For he knew that the fire was roaring down toward them, the wind having risen to a gale. The crash of falling trees and the snapping of the fire was like the sound from a battlefront. The noise was almost deafening.

"Is it far? Is it far?" gasped Amanda in his ear.

"Too far for comfort. But keep your heart up."

As the man spoke, a blazing brand swung through the air and came down, right on Amanda's shoulders. Carolyn May shrieked. Joseph Stagg brushed off the burning stick.

Cherry mounted another small ridge and then they clattered down into a little hollow where there was a slough beside the road. The water was green and stagnant, but it was water.

The man pulled in the hard-pressed horse and leaped down, passing the reins to Amanda. He whipped off his coat and dipped it in the mudhole. He drew it out dripping with water and slime.

"Look out, here! Have to shut your eyes!" he warned his two companions on the seat of the buckboard, and threw the saturated coat over Miss Amanda's head. The dripping garment sheltered Carolyn May as well.

"Now, good horse!" he yelled to Cherry, leaping back to the seat. "*Gid-ap!*"

The horse started up the slope. Another swirling brand came down upon them. Joseph Stagg fought it off with his bare hand. His shirt sleeve caught fire and he was painfully burned on the forearm before he could smother the blaze.

It was growing so hot now that the leaves on the trees curled and were blasted before the flames actually reached them. Behind the fleeing buckboard the conflagration was on both sides of the narrow path. They were barely keeping ahead of the enemy.

Another flaming brand fell, landing on Cherry's back. The horse squealed and leaped forward at a pace which Mr. Stagg could not control. Maddened by the burn, Cherry had taken the bit in his teeth and was running away.

The man threw down the reins. He could do nothing towards retarding the frightened horse's pace. Indeed, he did not want to stop him.

His left arm he flung around Miss Amanda and the child, and with his right hand clung to the rocking seat of the careening buckboard.

The wet steaming coat saved the woman and the child from injury. More than one brand settled on

it, and the garment only smoked. But Joseph Stagg was painfully burned.

On and on dashed the maddened horse. It was a mercy, indeed, that the buckboard was not overturned.

Sparks rose from burning brush clumps and flew over them in a shower. Prince yelped and whined pitifully, but, like Mr. Stagg, he hung on.

The burning and smouldering brands showered upon them. Bushes broke out into flame in advance, and on either side of the path. It was as though the combustion was spontaneous.

With a roaring like the charge of a field of artillery, a great mass of flame flew high over their heads. The tall trees were on fire on all sides. They were in the heart of the conflagration!

Joseph Stagg had lost all count of time. The forest road might still extend ahead of them for a mile, for all he knew.

But suddenly they broke cover, Cherry still galloping wildly, and plunged down an open ravine to the edge of a lake of sparkling water.

"Bless me! The lake! the lake!" hoarsely shouted the man.

The walls of the ravine sheltered them from smoke and fire for a moment, but the brands still fell. Cherry had halted on the edge of the lake, but Joseph Stagg urged him on into the water, flank deep. The shore was narrow and afforded little space for refuge. He lifted Amanda and the child

bodily from the seat and dropped them into the water.

"We're safe now," he said hoarsely, jumping in himself, and holding Carolyn May and Amanda. "We've got water enough here, thanks be! Hang on to me, Mandy. I'm not going to let you get away—no more, never!"

And by the way in which the woman clung to his arm it was evident that she did not propose to lose him.

They looked back at the roaring wall of flame. The forest was a seething furnace. Smoke drifted out over the lake in a heavy cloud. Dead embers showered about them. Prince rolled and burrowed in the damp sand at the edge of the water. Cherry filled his throat with a long, cool, satisfying draught.

"My, Uncle Joe! you are just the bravest man!" declared Carolyn May, finding her voice. "Isn't he, Miss Mandy? And, see, his arm is all burned. Dear me, we must get home to Aunty Rose and let her do it up for him."

CHAPTER XXVII

"TWO'S COMPANY"

TOWARDS the east the forest tract was completely burned to the banks of Codler's Creek. As the wind which had sprung up had driven the fire westward, there was little danger of the flames pressing nearer than the creek to Sunrise Cove and The Corners.

Joseph Stagg led the horse out of the water and advised Miss Amanda and Carolyn May to get into the seat of the buckboard again. Then he set forth, leading the horse along the narrow beach, while Prince followed wearily in the rear.

It was a rough route they followed, but the blackened forest was still too hot for them to pass through, had they been able to find a path. This was a lonely strip of shore and they saw no living soul but themselves.

Some trees were still smouldering along the creek banks. They could see these fires when they crossed the mouth of the stream, for the dusk had fallen and the flames sparkled like fireflies.

It was a long tramp, and the horse, the dog, and the man were alike wearied. Carolyn May went

fast asleep with her head pillowed in Miss Amanda's lap.

The latter and Joseph Stagg talked much. Indeed, there was much for them to say after all these years of silence.

The woman, worn and scorched of face, looked down on the smutted and sweating man with an expression in her eyes that warmed him to the marrow. She was proud of him. And the gaze of love and longing that the hardware merchant turned upon Amanda Parlow would have amazed those people that believed he had consideration and thought only for business.

In these few hours of alarm and close intimacy the man and the woman had leaped all the barriers time and pride had set up. Nothing further could keep Joseph Stagg and Amanda Parlow apart. And yet they never for one instant discussed the original cause of their estrangement. That was a dead issue.

The refugees reached The Corners about nine o'clock. Jedidiah Parlow had hobbled up to the store and was just then organising a party of searchers to go to the rescue of the hardware dealer and those of whom he had set out in search.

The village turned out *en masse* to welcome the trio who had so miraculously escaped the fire. Aunty Rose's relief knew no bounds. Mr. Parlow was undeniably glad to see his daughter safe; otherwise, he would never have overlooked the pitiable

state his horse was in. Poor Cherry would never be the same unblemished animal again.

"Well, I vum!" he said to Joseph Stagg, "you done it! Better'n I could, too, I reckon. I'll take the hoss home. You comin' with me, Mandy?" Then he saw the burns on the younger man's shoulders and arms. "The good land of Jehoshaphat! here's work for you to do, Mandy. If you air any sort of a nurse, I reckon you got your hands full right here with Joe Stagg," he added, with some pride in his daughter's ability. "Phew! them's bad-lookin' burns!"

"They are indeed," agreed Aunty Rose.

It was a fact that Mr. Stagg was in a bad state. Carolyn May had suggested that Aunty Rose would dress his burns, but Miss Amanda would allow nobody to do that but herself.

When the curious and sympathetic neighbours had gone and Miss Amanda was still busy making Joseph Stagg comfortable in the sitting-room, Aunty Rose came out into the kitchen, where she had already bathed and helped Carolyn May to undress, and where the little girl was now sleepily eating her supper of bread and milk.

"Well, wonders don't ever cease, I guess," she said, more to herself than to her little confidant. "Who'd have thought it!"

"Who'd have thought what, Aunty Rose?" inquired Carolyn May.

"Your uncle and Mandy Parlow have made it

up," breathed the woman, evidently much impressed by the wonder of it.

"Yes, indeed!" cried the child. "Isn't it nice? They aren't mad at each other any more."

"No, I should say they're not," Aunty Rose observed with grimness. "Far from it. It's a fact! I wouldn't have believed it if I hadn't seen it with my own eyes. They haven't got eyes for anybody but each other."

"Oh! Haven't they, Aunty Rose?" queried Carolyn May with sudden earnestness.

"I should say not, child! Holding hands in there like a pair of— Well, do you know what it means, Carolyn May?"

"That they love each other," the child said boldly. "And I'm *so* glad for them!"

"So am I," declared the woman, still in a whisper. "But it means changes here. Things won't be the same for long. I know Joseph Stagg for what he is."

"What is he, Aunty Rose?" asked Carolyn May in some trepidation, for the housekeeper seemed to be much moved.

"He's a very determined man. Once he gets set in a way, he carries everything before him. Mandy Parlow is going to be made Mrs. Joseph Stagg so quick that it'll astonish her. Now, you believe me, Carolyn May."

"Oh!" was the little girl's comment.

"There'll be changes here very sudden. 'Two's

company, three's a crowd,' Carolyn May. Never was a truer saying. Those two will want just each other—and nobody else."

"Oh, Aunty Rose!" murmured the little girl faintly. She had stopped eating the bread and milk. The housekeeper was too deeply interested in her own cogitations to notice how the child was being affected by her speech.

"I've told him a thousand times he should be married," concluded Aunty Rose. "And if Mandy Parlow's the woman for him, then it's all right. Whether she is or not, he'll marry her. Jedidiah or a thousand others couldn't stop Joseph Stagg now. I know what it means with him when he once makes up his mind.

"But there'll be no room here for anybody but those two, with their billing and cooing. 'Two's company, three's a crowd.'

"Well, Carolyn May, if you've finished your supper, we'd better go up to bed. It's long past your bedtime."

"Yes, Aunty Rose," said the little girl in a muffled voice.

Aunty Rose did not notice that Carolyn May did not venture to the door of the sitting-room to bid either Uncle Joe or Miss Amanda good-night. The child followed the woman upstairs with faltering steps, and in the unlighted bedroom that had been Hannah Stagg's she knelt at Aunty Rose's knee and murmured her usual petitions.

"Do bless Uncle Joe and Miss Amanda, now they're so happy," was a phrase that might have thrilled Aunty Rose at another time. But she was so deep in her own thoughts that she heard what Carolyn May said perfunctorily.

With her customary kiss, she left the little girl and went downstairs. Carolyn May had seen so much excitement during the day that she might have been expected to sleep at once, and that soundly. But it was not so.

The little girl lay with wide-open eyes, her imagination at work.

"Two's company, three's a crowd." She took that trite saying, in which Aunty Rose had expressed her own feelings, to herself. If Uncle Joe and Miss Amanda were going to be married, *they would not want anybody else around!* Of course not!

Somewhere, somehow, in listening to older people talk, Carolyn May had obtained the impression that all couples desired to be by themselves just as soon as they were married. They had no need nor desire for other people. Her idea was that the so-called "honeymoon" extended over long, long months.

"And what will become of me?" thought Carolyn May chokingly.

All the "emptiness" of the last few months swept over the soul of the little child in a wave that her natural cheerfulness could not withstand. Her anchorage in the love of Uncle Joe and Miss Amanda was swept away.

She was going to be alone again. There would be nobody whose right it was to care for her. With her mother and father drowned in a foreign sea and Uncle Joe utterly taken up with the "lovely lady" he loved, who was there to care for Carolyn May?

The heart of the little child swelled. Her eyes overflowed. She sobbed herself to sleep, the pillow muffling the sounds, more forlorn than ever before since she had come to The Corners.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE JOURNEY

IT was certainly a fact that Amanda Parlow immediately usurped some power in the household of the Stagg homestead. She ordered Joseph Stagg not to go down to his store that next day. And he did not!

Nor could he attend to business for several days thereafter. He was too stiff and lame and his burns were too painful.

Chet Gormley came up each day for instructions and was exceedingly full of business. A man would have to be very exacting indeed to find fault with the interest the boy displayed in running the store just as his employer desired it to be run.

"I tell you what it is, Car'lyn," Chet drawled, in confidence. "I'm mighty sorry Mr. Stagg got hurt like he did. But lemme tell you, it's jest givin' me the chance of my life!

"Why, maw says that Mr. Stagg and Miss Mandy Parlow'll git married for sure now!"

"Oh, yes," sighed the little girl. "They'll be married."

"Well, when folks git married they allus go off

on a trip. Course, *they* will. And me—I'll be runnin' the business all by myself. It'll be great! Mr. Stagg will see jest how much value I be to him. Why, it'll be the makin' of me!" cried the optimistic youth.

Yes, Carolyn May heard it on all sides. Everybody was talking about the affair of Uncle Joe and Miss Amanda.

Every time she saw her uncle and her "pretty lady" together the observant child could not but notice that they were utterly wrapped up in each other. It is only between lovers who have been heart-hungry for long years, as these two had, that a perfectly open expression of affection is maintained.

The modest spinster and the bashful bachelor seemed to have sloughed off their former natures. They had developed a new and exceedingly strange life, as different from their former existence as the butterfly's is from the caterpillar's.

Miss Amanda could not go past the easy chair in which the hardware dealer was enthroned without touching him. He, as bold as a boy, would seize her hand and kiss it. Her soft, capable hand would linger on his head in so tender a gesture that it might have brought tears to the eyes of a sympathetic observer.

Love, a mighty, warm, throbbing spirit, had caught them up and swept them away out of themselves—out of their old selves, at least. They had

eyes only for each other—thoughts only for each other.

Even a child could see something of this. The absorption of the two made Aunty Rose's remarks very impressive to Carolyn May.

A week of this followed—a week in which the trouble in Carolyn May's heart and brain seethed until it became unbearable. She was convinced that there would soon be no room for her in the big house. She watched Aunty Rose pack her own trunk, and the old lady looked very glum, indeed. She heard whispers of an immediate marriage, here in the house, with Mr. Driggs as the officiating clergyman.

Everybody in the neighbourhood was interested in the affair and eagerly curious; but Carolyn May could not talk about it. They thought she had been instructed not to speak of the matter, but the little girl only felt that she would cry if she talked of this event that was to make her uncle and Miss Amanda so happy and herself so miserable.

"Oh, Prince!" she sobbed, clinging around the dog's neck out under their favourite tree in the back yard of the Stagg place, "nobody wants us. We never ought to have come here. Maybe it would have been better if we *had* gone to the poorhouse.

"Only, I s'pose, they wouldn't have wanted you, my dear. And you are the very best friend I've got, Prince. You are! you are! *You* wouldn't go off and get married, would you?

"And I want 'em to be happy, too. Of course I

do! But—but I didn't know it was goin' to be like this. I—I wish I was back in our old home in New York. Don't you wish so, Princey?

"There we had things that were our very own. Even if my mamma and papa aren't there, it would be nice, I think. And Mr. and Mrs. Price would be kind to us—and Edna. And there's the janitor's boy—he was a real nice boy. And all the little girls we knew at school there.

"Oh!" cried Carolyn May, suddenly jumping up and dashing away her tears, "I would just *love* to go back there. And we *could,* Princey! I've got more'n ten dollars in my bank, for Uncle Joe gave me a ten-dollar gold piece at Christmas. That's more'n enough to take us back home. Oh, it is! it is!"

The child's excitement thrilled her through and through. Her eyes brightened and the flush came into her cheeks. She knew, through Chet Gormley, that Mr. Stagg had never done anything with the furniture in the flat. Her home—just as it had been when her mother and father were alive—was back there in New York City. She had been happy at The Corners in a way. But it was not the happiness she had known in her old home.

And now she believed that she saw great changes coming. Uncle Joe and Miss Amanda would be just as Aunty Rose had hinted—so deeply engaged with each other that they would have no time or thought for a sunny-haired and blue-eyed little girl

who had brought, all unknown to herself, a new creed into the lives of many of the adults of The Corners.

Carolyn May was not a sly child, but she was a secretive one. There is a difference. She had many thoughts in her little head that her adult friends did not suspect. She studied things out for herself. Being a child, her conclusions were not always wise ones.

She felt that she might be a stumbling-block to the complete happiness of Uncle Joe and Amanda Parlow. They might have to set aside their own desires because of her. She felt vaguely that this must not be.

"I can go home," she repeated over and over to herself.

"Home" was still in the New York City apartment house where she had lived so happily before that day when her father and mother had gone aboard the ill-fated *Dunraven*.

Their complete loss out of the little girl's life had never become fixed in her mind. It had never seemed a surety—not even after her talks with the sailor, Benjamin Hardy.

Hardy had long since left the locality, having taken a berth again on one of the lake schooners. Nobody seemed to have much time to give to Carolyn May just at this time. Wherever she wandered about the neighbourhood people were talking about the coming wedding of Uncle Joe and Miss Amanda.

Even Miss Minnie, at school, was quite in a flutter over it.

Friday afternoon the little girl went to the churchyard and made neat the three little graves and the one long one on the plot which belonged to Aunty Rose Kennedy. She almost burst into tears that evening, too, when she kissed Aunty Rose good-night at bedtime. Uncle Joe was down at the Parlows. He and Mr. Parlow actually smoked their pipes together in harmony on the cottage porch.

Aunty Rose was usually an early riser; but the first person up at The Corners on that Saturday morning was Carolyn May. She was dressed a full hour before the household was usually astir.

She came downstairs very softly, carrying the heavy bag she had brought with her the day she had first come to The Corners. She had her purse in her pocket, with all her money in it, and she had in the bag most of her necessary possessions. She wore a black dress, but not the one she had worn when she came from New York. That had been outgrown long since.

She washed her face and hands. Her hair was already combed and neatly braided. From the pantry she secured some bread and butter, and, with this in her hand, unlocked the porch door and went out. Prince got up, yawning, and shook himself. She sat on the steps to eat the bread and butter, dividing it with Prince.

"This is such a beautiful place, Princey," she

whispered to the mongrel. "We are going to miss it dreadfully, I s'pose. But, then— Well, we'll have the park. Only, you can't run so free there."

Prince whined. Carolyn May got up and shook the crumbs from her lap. Then she unchained the dog and picked up her bag. Prince pranced about her, glad to get his morning run.

The little girl and the dog went out of the gate and started along the road towards Sunrise Cove. Nobody seemed to be astir. She looked back and waved her hand at the Stagg house. She looked at the church, the blacksmith shop, and the store. She bade them all good-bye.

Prince came to walk beside her and whined. He evidently could not understand her going away from the place so early.

But Carolyn May knew what she was about. She knew all about the train that went south. It left Sunrise Cove station before most people were up, even at this time of year.

The houses had all been asleep at The Corners. So was the Parlow cottage when she trudged by. She would have liked to see Miss Amanda, to kiss her just once. But she must not think of that! It brought such a "gulpy" feeling into her throat.

Nobody saw Carolyn May and Prince until she reached Main Street. Then the sun had risen, and a few early persons were astir; but nobody appeared who knew the child or who cared anything about her.

At the railroad station nobody spoke to her, for

she bought no ticket. She was not exactly clear in her mind about tickets, anyway. She had found the conductor on the train coming up from New York a kind and pleasant man, and she decided to do all her business with him.

Had she attempted to buy a ticket of the station agent, undoubtedly he would have made some inquiry. As it was, when the train came along, Carolyn May, after seeing Prince put into the baggage car, climbed aboard with the help of a brakeman.

"Of course, if he howls *awfully*," she told the baggageman, who gave her a check without question, "I shall have to go in that car and sit with him."

There were not many people in the car. They steamed away from Sunrise Cove, and Carolyn May dabbled her eyes with her handkerchief and told herself to be brave.

The stations were a long way apart and the conductor did not come through for some time. When he did open the door and come into the car Carolyn May started up with a glad cry. It was the very conductor who had been so kind to her on the trip up from New York.

The railroad man knew her at once and shook hands most heartily with her.

"Where are you going, Carolyn May?" he asked.

"All the way with you, sir," she replied.

"To New York?"

"Yes, sir. I'm going home again."

"Then I'll see you later," he said, without asking for her ticket.

The conductor remembered the little girl very well, although he did not remember all the details of her story. Nine months before she had gone up to Sunrise Cove with him to visit relatives. As she had travelled alone then, he did not think it strange that she was now travelling back again without any guardian.

By-and-by he came back and sat down beside her. Carolyn May took out her purse and offered him money for her fare.

"Didn't they buy you a ticket?" he asked in surprise.

"No, sir," she told him honestly.

"Well, I'll tend to it for you. You'll want that money for candy and moving-picture shows in the city."

He was very kind to her and brought her satisfying news about Prince in the baggage car. The brakeman was nice, too, and brought her water to drink in a paper cup. And even the "candy butcher" made the journey pleasanter by his attentions. He once dropped a package of candy in Carolyn May's lap and then forgot to pick it up again!

So, altogether, she had a pleasant, if tiresome, ride to New York City.

At one place the brakeman brought into the car for her some sandwiches and a glass of milk. He assured her, too, that the men in the baggage car

had divided their lunches with Prince and had given him water.

She slept part of the time, and while she was awake there was so much going on that she could not feel very lonely. The excitement of travelling had taken that empty feeling out of her heart.

At last, the long stretches of streets at right angles with the tracks appeared—asphalt streets lined with tall apartment houses. This could be nothing but New York City. Her papa had told her long ago that there was no other city like it in the world.

She knew One Hundred and Twenty-fifth Street and its elevated station. That was not where she had boarded the train going north, when Mr. Price had placed her in the conductor's care, but it was nearer her old home—that she knew. So she told the brakeman she wanted to get out there, and he arranged to have Prince released.

The little girl alighted and got her dog without misadventure. She was down on the street level before the train continued on its journey downtown.

At the Grand Central Terminal the conductor was met with a telegram sent from Sunrise Cove by a certain frantic hardware dealer, and that telegram told him something about Carolyn May of which he had not thought to ask.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE HOMING OF CAROLYN MAY

IT was some distance from the railroad station to the block on which Carolyn May Cameron had lived all her life until she had gone to stay with Uncle Joe Stagg. The child knew she could not take the car, for the conductor would not let Prince ride.

She started with the dog on his leash, for he was not muzzled. The bag became heavy very soon, but she staggered along with it uncomplainingly.

Her dishevelled appearance, with the bag and the dog, gave people who noticed her the impression that Carolyn May had been away, perhaps, for a " fresh-air " vacation, and was now coming home, brown and weary, to her expectant family.

But Carolyn May knew that she was coming home to an empty apartment—to rooms that echoed with her mother's voice and in which lingered only memories of her father's cheery spirit.

Yet it was the only home, she felt, that was left for her.

She could not blame Uncle Joe and Miss Amanda for forgetting her. Aunty Rose had been quite disturbed, too, since the forest fire. She had given the

little girl no hint that provision would be made for her future.

Wearily, Carolyn May travelled through the Harlem streets, shifting the bag from hand to hand, Prince pacing sedately by her side.

"We're getting near home now, Princey," she told him again and again.

Thus she tried to keep her heart up. She came to the corner near which she had lived so long, and Prince suddenly sniffed at the screened door of a shop.

"Of course, poor fellow! That's the butcher's," Carolyn May said.

She bought a penny afternoon paper on a newsstand and then went into the shop and got a nickel's worth of bones and scraps for the dog. The clerk did not know her, for he was a new man.

They ventured along their block. The children all seemed strange to Carolyn May. But people move so frequently in Harlem that this was not at all queer. She hoped to see Edna or some other little girl with whom she had gone to school. But not until she reached the very house itself did anybody hail her.

"Oh, Carolyn May! Is that you?"

A lame boy was looking through the iron fence of the areaway. He was the janitor's son.

"Oh, Johnny! I'm real glad to see you!" cried the little girl. Then she added more slowly: "We—we've come home again—me and Prince."

"You've growed a lot, Carolyn May," said the boy. "My pop and mom's away."

"I'll go up into Edna's flat, then," the weary little girl sighed.

"The Prices have gone away, too. They won't be back till to-morrow some time."

"Oh!" murmured Carolyn May.

"But, say, I can get the keys to your flat. The water's turned on, too. Everything's all right up there, for Mrs. Price she sweeps and dusts it all every once in a while. Shall I get the keys?"

"Oh, if you will, please!" returned the relieved child.

The boy hobbled away, but soon returned with the outer-door key and the key to the apartment itself. Carolyn May took them and thanked him. Then she gladly went in and climbed the two flights to their floor.

She saw nobody, and easily let herself into the flat. It had been recently aired and dusted. Every piece of furniture stood just as she remembered it.

"Oh, Princey, it's *home!*" she whispered. "This is our real, real home! I—I loved 'em all at The Corners; but it wasn't like *this* there!"

Prince perhaps agreed, but he was too deeply interested in snuffing at the package of meat scraps she had purchased for his supper to reply.

"Well, well, Prince," she said, "you shall have it at once."

Dropping the bag in the private hall, she went into

the kitchen and stood on tiptoe to open the door of the closet above the dresser. Securing a plate, she emptied the contents of the paper into it, and set the plate down on the floor.

In spreading out the paper she saw some big-type headlines on the front page:

ROMANCE OF THE GREAT WAR

The Experiences of This Newspaper Man like Those of a Character in a Novel—Lost for Eight Months in the Desert—At the Mercy of Semi-savage Tribes, Man and Wife Escape at Last to Return in Safety and Health.

His Story Told to Beacon Reporter at Quarantine.

Carolyn May read no further. It did not particularly interest a little girl. Besides, she was very tired—too tired to think of her own supper. Had she read on, however, even her simple mind might have been startled by the following paragraphs printed below the heading of this startling story:

"Their wonderful good fortune in escaping from the disaster that overtook the steamer on which they travelled and which was caught between the gunfire of a French battleship and two of a Turkish squadron can only be equalled by the chance which followed. Naturally, as a journalist himself, Mr. Cameron is prepared to tell the details of his remarkable adventure in the columns of the *Beacon* at a later date.

"The boat in which they left the sinking *Dunraven* was separated in the night and fog from that of the other refugees and was carried by the current far to the south. In fact, they were enveloped by fog until they landed upon a stretch of deserted beach.

"There was no town near, nor even an encampment of Arabs. But soon after their disembarkation and before the officer in command could take means to communicate with any civilised, or semi-civilised, place a party of mounted and armed tribesmen swooped down on the castaways.

"These people, being Mohammedans, and having seen the battle the day before between the French and the Turks, considered the castaways enemies and swept them away with them into the desert to a certain oasis, where for nearly eight months Mr. John Lewis Cameron and his wife and the other refugees from the *Dunraven* were kept without being allowed to communicate with their friends.

"Mr. Cameron was on furlough from his paper because of ill-health. At the beginning of his captivity he was in a very bad way, indeed, it is said. But the months in the hot, dry atmosphere of the desert have made a new man of him, and he personally cannot hold much rancour against the Mohammedan tribe that held him a prisoner."

There was more of the wonderful story, but the sleepy little girl had given it no attention whatsoever. Prince had eaten and lain down in his familiar corner. The little girl had gone softly into her own room and made up her bed as she had seen her mother and Mrs. Price make it.

Then she turned on the water in the bathtub and took a bath. It was delightful to have a real tub instead of the galvanised bucket they used at Uncle Joe's.

She put on her nightgown at last, knelt and said her prayer, including that petition she had never left out of it since that first night she had knelt at Aunty Rose's knee:

"God bless my papa and mamma and bring them safe home."

The faith that moves mountains was in that prayer.

CHAPTER XXX

THE HOUSE OF BEWILDERMENT

CAROLYN MAY slept the sleep of the wearied, if not of the carefree. The noises of the street did not disturb her, not even the passing of the fire-department trucks some time after midnight.

Nor did nearer sounds arouse her. She had no knowledge of the fact that a procession of A.D.T. boys and messengers from the railroad company came to ring the bell of the Prices' apartment. Later the janitor's family was aroused, but the little lame boy thought it would be better for him to say nothing about having seen Carolyn May and of having given her the keys.

So when, in the early morning, a taxicab stopped at the street door and a bushy-haired, troubled-looking man got out and helped a woman clad in brown to the sidewalk, the janitor had no knowledge of the fact that Carolyn May and Prince were upstairs in the apartment that had been so long empty.

"And the Prices are away," said Uncle Joe in a troubled voice. "What do you think of that, Mandy?"

"Oh, Joe! where could the dear child have gone?"

"I haven't seen her," declared the janitor. "But I can let you into the flat. There's been lots of telegrams to Mr. Price in the night—and they weren't all yours. You're Carolyn May's uncle, ain't you?" he asked Mr. Stagg.

Uncle Joe acknowledged the relationship. "Let's go upstairs," he said to Amanda. "Now that I'm here——"

"Oh, dear, Joe!" almost wept Amanda, "could anything have happened to her in this big city?"

"'Most anything, I s'pose," growled Joseph Stagg, following close on the janitor's heels.

The janitor's passkey grating in the lock of the private hall door started something that none of them expected. A startling bark echoed in the rooms which were supposed to be empty.

"Whatever is that?" gasped the janitor.

"It's Prince! It's her dog!" shouted Uncle Joe.

"The child is here!" cried Amanda Parlow, and she was the first to enter the apartment.

Prince bounded wildly to meet her. He leaped and barked. A cry sounded from a room beyond. Miss Amanda and Uncle Joe rushed in.

Sleepily, her face flushed, rubbing her blue eyes wide open, Carolyn May sat up in bed.

"Oh, Uncle Joe! Oh, Miss Amanda!" she said. "I—I was just dreaming my own papa and mamma had come home and found me here."

"My dear! My *dear!*" sobbed Amanda Parlow, dropping to her knees beside the bed.

"You're a great young one!" growled Uncle Joe, blowing his nose suspiciously. "You've nigh about scared ev'rybody to death. Your Aunty Rose is almost crazy."

"Oh—I'm—sorry," stammered Carolyn May. "But—you—see— Uncle Joe! you and Miss Amanda are going to be happy now. Aunty Rose says 'two is comp'ny.' So you wouldn't have room for me."

"Bless me!" gasped the hardware dealer. "What do you know about this child's feeling that way, Mandy?"

"I am afraid we have been selfish, Joe," the woman said, sighing. "And that is something that Carolyn May has never been in her life!"

"I dunno—I dunno," said Uncle Joe ruefully, and looking at the little, flowerlike face of the child. "How about Aunty Rose? How d'you s'pose she feels about Hannah's Car'lyn running away?"

"Oh!" ejaculated the little girl.

"It may be that 'two's company and three's a crowd,' but you and Aunty Rose would be two likewise, wouldn't you, Car'lyn May?"

"I—I never thought of that, Uncle Joe," the child whispered.

"Why, your running away from The Corners this way is like to make both Mandy and me unhappy, as well as Aunty Rose. I—I don't b'lieve Mandy could

get married at all if she didn't have a little girl like you to carry flowers and hold up her train. How about it, Mandy?"

"That is quite true, Carolyn May," declared Miss Amanda, hugging the soft little body of the child tightly again.

"Why, I—I——"

Carolyn May was, for once, beyond verbal expression. Besides, there was a noise in the outer hall and on the stairway. The door had been left open by the surprised janitor.

A burst of voices came into the apartment. Uncle Joe turned wonderingly. Miss Amanda stood up. Carolyn May flew out of bed with a shriek that startled them both.

"My papa! My mamma! I hear them! They're not drownd-ed! God didn't let 'em be lost at sea!"

She was out of the room in her nightgown, pattering in bare feet over the floor. A brown man, with a beard and twinkling blue eyes, caught her up in strong arms and hugged her swiftly—safely—to his breast.

"Snuggy!" he said chokingly. "Papa's Snuggy!"

"My baby! My baby!" cried the woman at whom Joseph Stagg was staring as though he believed her to be the ghost of his lost sister Hannah.

It was several hours later before there was a really sane thing said or a sane thing done in that little Harlem flat.

"It's like a lovely fairy story!" cried Carolyn

May. "Only it's better than a fairy story—it's *real!*"

"Yes, yes, it's real, thank God!" murmured the happy mother.

"And I'm never going away from my little girl again," added the father, kissing her for at least the tenth time.

"But what Aunty Rose is going to do, I don't see," said Uncle Joe, shaking his head with real commiseration. "I've sent her a despatch saying that the child is safe. But if we go back without Hannah's Car'lyn——"

"The poor soul!" said his sister. "I can believe that in her secret, subdued way Aunty Rose Kennedy is entirely wrapped up in Carolyn May. She will suffer if they are separated for long—and so abruptly."

"That is true," Miss Amanda said gently. "And Joe will feel it, too."

"I bet I will," agreed Joseph Stagg. "But I have you, Mandy. Aunty Rose isn't going to have anybody. And for her to go back alone into her old house—for she won't stay with us, of course—" he shook his head dolefully.

"Let me write to Aunty Rose," said Hannah Cameron briskly. "We want her here. Why, of course, we do! don't we, Carolyn May?"

"Why!" cried the child delightedly, "that's just the way out of it, isn't it? My! how nice things do come about in this world, don't they? Aunty Rose

shall come here. You'll like her ever so much, papa. And Prince will be glad to have her come, for she always *has* treated Princey real well."

Prince, who had been standing by with his ears cocked, yawned, whined, and lay down with a sigh, as though considering the matter quite satisfactorily settled.

Carolyn May, having climbed up into her father's arms, reached out and drew her mother close beside her.

THE END

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